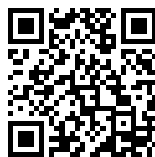


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# The Santa Maria Institute

By Anna C. Minogue

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# **The Story of the Santa Maria Institute**

**BY  
ANNA C. MINOGUE**

**WITH PREFACE BY  
THE MOST REV. HENRY MOELLER, D.D.  
ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI**

**CINCINNATI  
SANTA MARIA INSTITUTE  
1922**

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**THIS book, which but  
feebly records their  
noble work of saving the  
heritage of Faith for the  
Italians of Cincinnati, and  
of opening up the new  
field of Catholic Social  
Service in the same city,  
is lovingly dedicated to**

**SISTER JUSTINA  
and  
SISTER BLANDINA**

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## PREFACE

**T**HE dominant note running through this brief sketch of the Santa Maria Institute recalls in clear accents the ardent, generous and dauntless striving of two Sisters of Charity to gather unto Christ souls redeemed by Him. For these two religious who laid the foundation of the Institute had more than once to confront conditions and obstacles that would have discouraged many a stout-hearted person. Their firm conviction that they were doing a work pleasing to heaven sustained them in their dark hours of trial, and made them confidently hope that God would not allow their well-meant efforts to fail. Their high aspirations have been gratified, their ardent hopes realized, and their ceaseless efforts crowned with success. The small seed planted twenty-five years ago, watered by the spiritual dew of heaven, has grown to a large tree, gathering under its protecting branches many, irrespective of race or religion, who in consequence have been saved from spiritual ruin.

\* \* \*

The Santa Maria is in an especial manner interested in the Italians in Cincinnati, who have been repeatedly tempted by renegades to give up for material considerations the faith planted in their hearts in their native land, sunny Italy. This sketch also recounts in an unaffected manner the valuable moral and financial assistance cheerfully given the Sisters to frustrate the wicked machinations of the proselytizers.

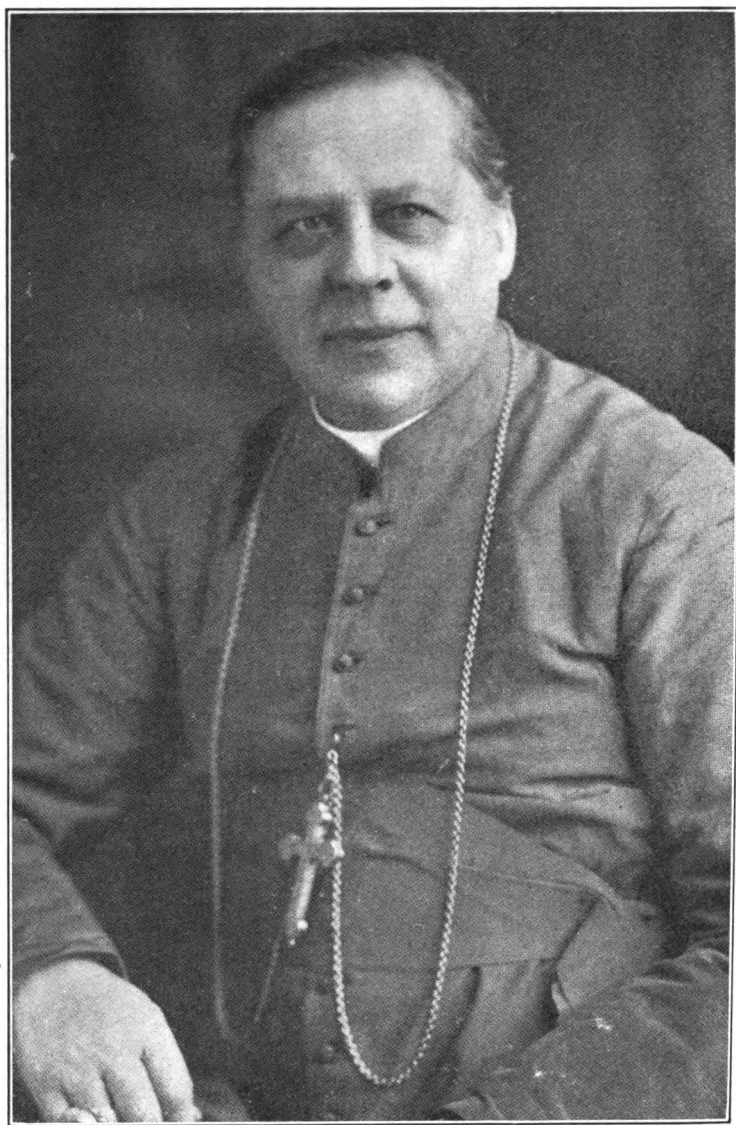
We eagerly use this opportunity to thank both the Sisters for the service they rendered Religion and all who gave them a helping hand in their truly praiseworthy endeavors. We cherish the fond hope that the growth of the Santa Maria during the next twenty-five years will not only be as great, but far exceed that of the first quarter of a century of its existence.

May Christ pour out His choicest blessings on the Sisters, and on all benefactors and friends of the Santa Maria.

✠ HENRY MOELLER,  
*Archbishop of Cincinnati*

*Cincinnati, November 28, 1921*





**MOST REV. HENRY MOELLER, D.D.**

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## Chapter I—The Sisters Begin Their Work —They Are Welcomed by Archbishop Elder—The First Attempt

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**T**HE story of the Santa Maria Institute of Cincinnati, Ohio, is another and a glorious chapter in the history of the daughters of Mother Seton which began in 1809, when the distinguished convert, Mrs. Elizabeth Bayley Seton, founded the Sisters of Charity at Baltimore, Maryland. Through the years that have followed, its pages record a marvelous development, which reveals the vision and wisdom of its holy founder. This is exemplified in the schools of the Congregation, its hospitals, its orphan asylums, and pronouncedly in the Santa Maria Institute, which in its quarter of a century of existence has become a center of Catholic social activities without abandoning its original purpose of protecting the faith of the Italian people.

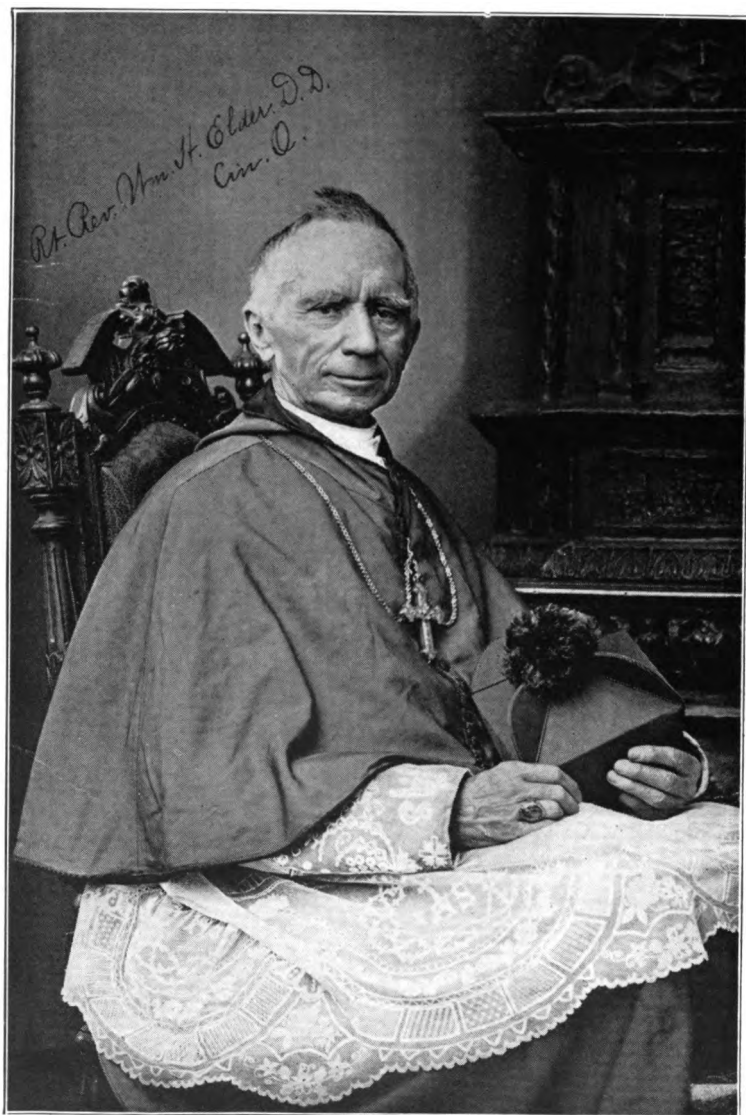
In the year 1897, which saw the establishment of the Institute, Mother Mary Blanche Davis was the Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Her guidance had been felt at home and on their missions, scattered from Michigan to New Mexico, but heavy as were the cares of her position they did not engage all her zeal and interest. There was now coming up to her the cry of neglected souls in the city lying below the mother house at Mount St. Joseph-on-the-Ohio. Its echo was heard in hours of prayer; it would not be hushed, that cry of the neglected Italians of Cincinnati.



In the earlier days of foreign immigration to Cincinnati, there were few Italians, those who ventured to the New World being absorbed by the cities in the East, but as the tide of Italian immigration swelled Cincinnati began to receive many of these people. It is a truism to say that the Italians are Catholic. Receiving the Faith in Apostolic days, Italy has never departed from it. At home religion was as much a part of the Italian's life as his daily toil and recreation; but in coming to America all this was changed for him. With everyone free to follow his religious bent or shape a new one for himself, the bewildered Italian saw religion relegated to the background. Among his co-religionists he found "Irish churches" and "German churches"; and between him and either nationality there was little of mutual understanding, of sentiment, of ideals. Besides, he was poor, and he hated poverty. The opportunities to throw off this condition were numerous; and in his mad rush to make the most of them he neglected, if he did not forget, the priceless heritage of his race. The Catholic churches of the city saw few Italian men and women among their worshippers, the parochial schools few Italian children among their pupils.

In Cincinnati, as in other cities, a church of their own nationality was in time provided. Through the fatherly interest of Archbishop Elder of saintly memory, the Church of the Sacro Cuore di Gesu, in Broadway, had been built, and here Italian priests, in the performance of their duty, had struggled against many odds, not the least of which were the ancient differences in feeling and





**MOST REV. W. H. ELDER, D.D.**

dialect between the inhabitants of one part of Italy and those of another, a distance of three miles often effecting such a change. The Cincinnati Italians were chiefly from Genoa and Sicily, people less closely united by sentiment and sympathy than were those of Boston and South Carolina previous to the war between the States. The Genoese drifted to the upper part of the city; the Sicilians crowded into the tenements of the lower part and Court Street; and where their union would have made for strength, each side kept to itself, a unit only in sectional dislike. While there were many from both colonies who responded to the zealous efforts of their priests, the majority were indifferent and the children were neglected.

Wherever there is a weak place in the Church's widespread field there may the enemies be seen assembling, notwithstanding more crying needs of their own. In Cincinnati the Methodists, taking advantage of this indifference on the part of the Italians and lack of interest on the part of the rest of the Catholic laity, began their work of proselytism. They opened a mission for Italians on the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Longworth Street, and placed it in charge of two apostate Italian women and two American teachers, who began to gather into it the Italian children of the city, particularly those of the immediate neighborhood. Their intimate knowledge of the people and their common language naturally gave the two Italian women superior means of approach; and thus doors that would have been suspiciously fast against a friendly stranger were open to the proselytizers. That

they rendered assistance to the people, especially to the mothers, is unquestionably true; and had our separated brethren, in thus blazing the trail for work among poor Italians not sought to destroy their faith no odium would have been attached to their labors. Yet withal, we have this unethical method of theirs to thank for the fact that this year of 1922 sees the Santa Maria Institute celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation.

The activities of the Methodist Mission and the modicum of success attending it, caused the practical Italian Catholics and their American co-religionists to rouse themselves to the danger which was threatening the faith of the Italian people, but the Archbishop, bowed by years and the burden of an episcopate that had its cross set with nails, knew not where to turn for help.

Among the religious whom that summer's annual retreat had brought to the mother-house of the Sisters of Charity were two sisters, members of a well-known Italian family of Cincinnati, Sister Justina and Sister Blandina Segale. Early in life they had enrolled themselves among Mother Seton's daughters, and their work at home and on the missions had been characterized by the enthusiasm and tireless energy of the Latin race, when once started for a goal. If this were the history of the Institute in the south-west the names of these two Sisters would vitalize many of its pages, but at the beginning of this story which records the growing work of their religious life we claim the privilege of saying these few words in their praise.

A few years previous the Sisters had been recalled from the south-west. Sister Justina was now teaching in Lansing, Michigan, while Sister Blandina was in charge of the school for boys at Fayetteville, Ohio. Hence it happened that they were again together at the mother-house and with the pleading call of the neglected Italians of the city echoing in her heart, Mother Mary Blanche beheld in these two Sisters, kneeling before her one morning in the chapel, a means of answering it. It was an inspiration and she acted promptly.

Discussing the project with the two Sisters, Mother Mary Blanche discovered that their love of the Church and of their native land made them ready to undertake any task for the preservation of the Faith among their countrymen, consequently she commissioned them to go to Archbishop Elder, the Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, and offer their services. Accordingly, the two Sisters called on the archbishop the following day but he was not at home. They then visited the Sacro Cuore parish house, where they learned from the curate, that the pastor had gone to New York, and that one of the purposes of his visit was to try to obtain a community of Italian Sisters to open a parochial school in this city. The gravity of the situation became more apparent to the Sisters in their interview with the young priest. They paid some visits to friends of former days, upon whose assistance they felt they could rely; and from one and all received the confirmation of the truth that their coming was late, for already the enemy was sowing the cockle and it had struck root in the field.

On the return of the archbishop the Sisters waited upon him, and tears of joy filled his eyes at the message they brought. He hastened to the telephone and calling for Mother Mary Blanche, thanked her in a voice which betrayed his emotion for sending the Sisters to take up a work so dear to him and which had appeared so dangerously hopeless that no one had attempted to approach it.

With five dollars for carfare in their pocket-book and unbounded confidence in God in their hearts, the Sisters began their work by making a survey of the field of their future labors, and visiting the homes of the Italians. This survey confirmed the rumor of the deplorable religious condition of the people. One means they took for inaugurating their work was to assemble in a store all those living within the radius of a block and recite the Rosary with them, explain the doctrines of the Church, and urge them to go to Mass and receive the sacraments. This practice they carried through the colony and it proved efficacious.

After the survey, it was decided that the first thing to do was to open a school. As the church was in Broadway it was fitting that the school should be nearby, and the Very Rev. M. J. O'Connor, S.J., rector of St. Xavier's College, who was interested in the undertaking offered the Sisters the basement of St. Thomas' Church for the purpose.

It was in the West End, however, that the proselytizers were most active, and to be most effective there should be a school there also. The

Very Rev. John Mackey, rector of the cathedral, who was well aware of the spiritual condition of many of the Italians, rejoiced at the coming of the Sisters, and offered them a completely furnished schoolroom in the basement of the Springer Institute, which stands at Eighth and Plum Streets, than which no better situation could have been desired. The Sisters were themselves Italians and naturally acquainted with the temper of their people, but whatever misgivings they may have had regarding this situation they kept in their own minds, and began to prepare for the opening of school, on Monday, September 13.

Announcement of the important event was made in the various churches on the previous Sunday. At the Sacro Cuore Church the pastor, Father Alussi, earnestly pleaded with the parents to send their children to the new school. The leading members of the congregation whose children were in private schools, were enthusiastic over the project, and regarded its success as assured, while the poor, for whom it was intended, smiled as only the Italian can, and tramped back to their tenement homes.

Many a morning in their long religious life had these two Sisters wakened to meet the opening day of a work upon which much depended, but never with such contending emotions of fear and hope as swayed them that thirteenth day of September. They reached Springer Institute before the other Sisters of Charity who taught the children in the well-appointed classrooms upstairs, and busied themselves in giving final touches to the room assigned to them in the basement. Soon



the trip of little feet was heard on the flagged yard; then the procession of boys and girls formed, and each class attended by a Sister, filed up the steps and entered the cathedral for the students' Mass. Did the two watching Sisters picture themselves leading another band within these hallowed walls? Unquestionably, for they were ever among the followers of the vision. The half hour passed. The teachers led their children back to the classrooms. The two Sisters below heard the echo of the opening prayer, then a silence which the surging traffic of the street did not disturb fell upon the tall building, but still no dark-eyed child of Italy tripped over the flagged yard to enter the door of the basement classroom. The silver chimes in the cathedral tower rang out the passage of time, and no pupil came to the waiting Sisters. When the clocks struck ten, the Sisters left the building.

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## Chapter II—A School Opened at Holy Trinity Church—The Incorporation of the Italian Santa Maria Institute

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**W**HEN a success that outstrips our expectation crowns our work, we realize on looking back in after years how necessary for us was our first failure, although at the time it left us crushed. Out of the sudden ending of their plans for their people along the beaten track, the Sisters caught a glimpse of a new direction of effort, but as yet the glimpse was as faint as the failure was real.

Instinctively they turned at once to the archbishop's residence. The venerable man was distressed by their report, and when he asked for a possible cause the Sisters gave their explanation. As against the basement room as a charity and the well equipped public school as a right, there could be no question on which side the choice of Italian pride would fall. The archbishop was a Southern gentleman, and consequently greatly instructed by the heart. He knew, moreover, that there are only two classes who look for God in the manger, the shepherds, guided by angels, the Magi, led by the star.

"Sisters," said the loving father of his people, "get a room and I will pay the rent for the first quarter."

"And who, Your Grace, will pay for the second quarter?" asked Sister Blandina.

The answer showed the impracticability of the

plan, and a little later they parted, with their future line of action still undetermined. At the end of the corridor was Dr. Mackey's office, with its door ajar. To pay their respects was only courteous in the Sisters; besides, they owed it to him to report failure as they would have reported success. Now from one of his windows, Dr. Mackey had also been watching for the coming of the Italian children; hence he was expecting the Sisters, and however deeply he shared their chagrin, he was not lacking that "little worm of laughter that eats the Irish heart."

"You have come to say good-bye!" he cried as they entered.

Quick as a shot came Sister Blandina's reply:

"Don't you believe it, Father Mackey!"

He leaned back in his chair and laughed, for it was good to meet one like himself, who would not recognize defeat, but he shook his head over a racial propensity which was incomprehensible to the son of a people who, when deprived of their schools and universities, which were the boast of Europe, accepted the class-room behind the hedge or in the bowels of the earth, rather than lose their sacred heritage of faith and knowledge. However he encouraged the Sisters to go on, assuring them that there was a way out of the difficulty. Back to the Italian colony went the two Sisters. Everywhere they were assured that the idea was good, but—and a lame excuse would follow, which did not hide from the Sisters the true explanation.

Now that the school in the Springer Institute was a closed incident, the Sisters resumed their systematic visitation of the Italian families of the

city, always urging parents to send their children to the parochial schools. The conditions they encountered made them realize that something bigger than an Italian school was needed. The children were, perhaps, the least to be pitied of the group, for they could yield themselves to the process of adaptation, while it was breaking their elders. The idea of a neighborhood house, of community service, was as yet in swaddling clothes, and many wise and prudent folk held that so radical a youngster had better to be strangled in his cradle. But the Sisters, climbing the dark stairs of tenements, sitting in overcrowded rooms, saw how hopeless was the outlook for these foreigners. Thrust into a strange environment, separated by ages from the aspirations and ideals of the new land, alien to its language and customs, utterly ignored, when not scorned, it was not surprising that these people should feel like creatures caught in a net. What they needed was a place to which they could turn in their perplexity, certain of receiving advice, and, if necessary, material aid; where the young people might find recreation, free from dangerous influences; where the children would be instructed in the better ways of living. But when the Sisters voiced their idea, it found little favor in places where favor was essential, for those who realized its advantages objected that the opening of the smallest house meant the incurring of debt, and the venture was too uncertain for that, while the rest failed to see the necessity of any such departure for the Italians, inasmuch as other nationalities had come to America, been assimilated into the national life

and preserved the faith without any such coddling. The Sisters saw the reasonableness of both views but they also saw more than their objectors, and maintained their own opinion. One day, during their endless tramp on the quest of souls, they found a penny, and laid it aside as the nucleus of the fund for their new home, for they recalled what St. Teresa, facing a like difficulty, had said: "A few pennies and Teresa are nothing; a few pennies, Teresa and God are omnipotent." So they took for their motto: "*Un soldo e due Sorelle son niente. Un soldo, due Sorelle e Dio sono onnipotente.*"

One day when they were calling on the archbishop it seemed as if their faith was to be speedily rewarded when he said: "Go to Father Mackey's room, he has good news for you." Good news was such a rare commodity for them that they lost no time in obeying. "There are a couple of thousand dollars waiting for you," Father Mackey said to them, "if you can meet the requirements." Two thousand dollars! Aladdin's wand was not more potent than those words for the Sisters. Father Mackey explained that the administrator of the estate of Mr. Christian Moerlein had called to consult about the distribution of some of the legacies bequeathed to the charities of the archdiocese. Among the bequests was one of two thousand dollars for an Italian charity, and Father Mackey told the Sisters that if the Italian work were organized they could receive this legacy at once, so he urged such organization. The archbishop, who had had the situation under consideration for some time, gave the Sisters permis-

sion to solicit funds for the purchase of a house, for which the necessary furnishings and equipment could be obtained with the donation from the Moerlein estate. The sky was brightening, but as the project had yet to receive the sanction of persons in authority a consultation was held which brought to light new difficulties, and so the acquisition of the house seemed again remote. Still disappointments are more encouraging than quiescence, for they prove that at least the project is alive.

The Sisters went ahead. Several young ladies had become interested in the work, and through their aid, the Sunday school was increasing. Before the end of September one hundred and fifty-five children were enrolled. Prominent among those first lay assistants of the Sisters were the Misses Sturla, Arata, Camereone and Brichetto. Thus the effort of the Sisters to offset the work of the proselytizers was forcing itself on the attention of the Catholics of the city, and was not unfelt by the proselytizers themselves, to whom it was daily manifested that a new influence was operating, that there had been brought in the little leaven which should leaven the whole. Father Mackey's advice for an organization was acted upon, and a society for safeguarding the interests of the Italians of the city and suburbs was formed. The meeting for the purpose of organization was held September 27, 1897, at the Good Samaritan Hospital, there being present, Mother Mary Blanche Davis, Superior of the Sisters of Charity; Sister Gabriella Crowe, mother-assistant; Sister Mary Agnes McCann, secretary and treasurer; Sister

Sebastian Shea, Superior of the Good Samaritan Hospital; Sister Vincent O'Keefe, Sister Blandina Segale and Sister Justina Segale. After deliberation the following officers were unanimously elected: Sister Justina Segale, president; Sister Blandina Segale, secretary and treasurer; Mother Mary Blanche Davis, vice president; Sister Gabriella Crowe, Sister Vincent O'Keefe, Sister Sebastian Shea and Sister Mary Agnes McCann, trustees. The organization was incorporated on December 8, 1897, under the name of "The Santa Maria Italian Educational and Industrial Home."

One Saturday morning some two weeks later, as the Sisters were about to set out for their daily visitation, a messenger met them, requesting their immediate presence at the archbishop's residence. Alternately swayed by hopes and fears, they hastened to obey, and a glance at the smiling face of the archbishop assured them that all was well.

"Sisters," he said, "you may open your school on Monday. You have not only the rooms, but the pupils also, this time!"

What they heard gladdened them more than if the legacy had been handed to them. Their first work for the school had not been entirely barren, for to twelve mothers the voice of conscience had spoken clear and direct, and they resolved not to re-enter their children in the public schools. While the untried basement school was distasteful to them, there was at hand another parochial school, that of Holy Trinity, and thus it happened that while the two Sisters waited for their pupils at Springer Institute, the Superior Sisters of Notre Dame, teaching at Holy Trinity school, saw, with

something akin to consternation, the arrival of twelve Italian mothers, leading their flocks of various ages, but of one temperament. In broken English, the mothers made it known that they wanted their offspring to grow up good Catholics, and so they brought them into the Sisters' school, nor did any doubt of the joy this must give the nun enter their honest minds. But the teachers of the less emotional American children require all the resourcefulness at their command, and when the Sister beheld a band of exuberant young Italians about to be let loose among her pupils, she appealed in dismay to the pastor.

Holy Trinity Church was then in charge of the Very Rev. John C. Albrinck, vicar-general of the diocese, whose charity was all-embracing. It gladdened him to know that the Italian mothers had brought their children to his school. The Sister told him of her fears for the effect they might have upon the other children, and generously offered to ask her superior to appoint a teacher for the Italian children, but Father Albrinck said he would enter the children at the Italian school which he had heard Father Mackey was starting at Springer Institute, if necessary, paying the tuition himself, and until he could make arrangements for the transfer, he bade the Sister to accept the children. In the course of time Father Albrinck went to the cathedral to confer with Father Mackey regarding the children, stopping first to pay his respects to the archbishop, from whom he learned the failure of the Italian school and its cause. Straightway and without any provisos, Father Albrinck offered the arch-



bishop two of his best school-rooms, completely furnished, for the use of the Italian children, adding that if that space were not sufficient, he would place at their disposal the young men's club-room. He also offered the use of the chapel for Sunday school and religious services. Like a gift from Heaven the offer fell into the hands of the archbishop, and he immediately called for the Sisters. Thus did those twelve poor mothers, responsive to the voice of conscience, become the instruments in the hands of Divine Providence for inaugurating a work whose benefits to their people are incalculable.

The joy of the Sisters was boundless. They hurried to Sixth Street to which the Saturday market draws so many of their people, and men, women and children were informed of the opening on the following Monday of the school at Holy Trinity, and were told to spread the news and to aid in its success. Thus another Monday morning, October 11, found the Sisters expecting their pupils, and this time they were not disappointed. Twenty-six Sicilian children were before them in Holy Trinity yard. The two Sisters waited until the other children had entered the church for Mass, before starting with their band, each of whom carried a paper bag, which they assumed, contained refreshments for the morning recess. On entering the sacred edifice, the children found much to attract them, and the better to survey their surroundings, they climbed upon the benches, and from their perch studied the frescoed walls and pictured windows. When these lost their novelty, one boy turned his back to the altar

and began eating a banana. He was soon followed by another, who displayed a sausage, then another and another, until the twenty-six children faced the congregation, each eating from the contents of the paper bag.

After what seemed an endless time for the Italian children, and doubtless for the two Sisters as well, the Mass was over, and the other children, after the genuflection, filed decorously out. The Italians had finished their repast, and descended from the benches, and when the time came for them to depart, they decided to genuflect, also, so some bowed toward the altar, others toward the side walls, and not a few toward the organ loft; but no noisy demonstration had occurred during the services, and the Sisters felt they had still cause for thanksgiving. But that half-hour of restraint had too severely taxed the volatile Sicilian nature, and on entering the school room it burst all bounds. It was theirs—their school! and with a shout which told the Sisters that the play was on, they began. They sprang upon the benches and leaping from one to the other, traversed the room amid a deafening uproar. Had Father Mackey overlooked that scene, perhaps he would have been as well pleased that Father Albrinck had better educational facilities than he to offer to the Italian people!

For a full moment the Sisters looked on in silence; then one who felt that she fully understood their temperament laughed a derisive laugh. What words, even blows, could not have done, that laugh instantly effected. It stopped each child where he or she was, and the hot heart sent the

hotter blood into their faces. They were being laughed at! In silence, they stepped to the floor, and at the command of the Sister took their places before the desks.

The children were divided into two rooms, Sister Justina taking the larger, Sister Blandina the smaller pupils. Within a week, the morning worshippers in Holy Trinity Church, saw in the Italian pupils, whose number was increasing, models of devotion and good behaviour; while in the class-room discipline was laying its firm hand on the excitable natures and knowledge was being absorbed by the quick minds. They were also given instructions in their religion and the love and faith which responded had all the depth and beauty of their race. With rapt faces and rigid forms, they would listen to the Sister as she told them of the Blessed Infant and His holy Mother and the good St. Joseph who protected them from danger.

One day a tiny maid approached the Sister's desk, with a finger held under a word she did not know. "Virgin," said the Sister, pronouncing the word for her. "Is that the same name as the Blessed Virgin?" asked the child. When the Sister replied that it was, the tot impulsively lifted the book to her lips and kissed the word. On another occasion, when the Sister was speaking of the angels and the blessedness of Heaven, one upon whom the duty of attending Mass on Sunday had made a deep impression asked anxiously, "But, Sister, don't the angels go to church on Sunday?"

From the school the pupils carried their lessons

in piety to the homes, where they became so many little disciples of Christ. More powerful than priest or Sister were those children with the lax, indifferent parents, and the congregation of Sacro Cuore church began to increase.

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### Chapter III—The Proselytizers Attempt to Break Up the School—The Lost Legacy— The Willing Workers' Society

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**S**TRENUOUS days for the Sisters followed. Every morning found them at their desks and when classes were dismissed they visited the homes of the people. The proselytizers, with years of organization behind them and unlimited means at their command, felt no great alarm. They increased the activities of their mission, and furthermore were strengthened by some influential Italians, who had started an independent work among their people.

We have seen that the Moerlein estate had left a legacy of two thousand dollars for charitable work among the Italians, whereupon a prominent Italian woman conceived the plan of securing this for a home for poor Italians, which she proposed to found. She succeeded in inducing several other well-known Italians to join her in the incorporation of such an organization, and rooms for the institution were secured in the Deaconesses' Home in Wesley Avenue. That the unfortunate woman—for the mental affliction which later overtook her perhaps accounts for her deplorable action—received Italian aid in thus betraying Catholic interests into the hands of the enemy, is sad to record, but the fact stands that the Italian Home was duly incorporated and made its demand for the Moerlein legacy. However, Mr. Goetz, the administrator of the estate, refused to meet this

demand without the approval of Archbishop Elder. To the committee which waited on him to secure this approval the archbishop replied that inasmuch as the two Sisters of Charity were doing charitable work among the Italians, he could not comply with the request, but he expressed his willingness to divide the legacy, giving one thousand dollars to the Sisters and one thousand dollars to the Italian Home. Apparently acquiescing, the committee went to Mr. Goetz and told him the archbishop had consented to allow them to receive the money. Mr. Goetz called the archbishop on the telephone for a confirmation of the statement, and the unsuspecting prelate, supposing that the committee had reported him correctly and was asking for the portion offered and accepted, assured Mr. Goetz of his willingness to let them have the money. It was thereupon turned over to the committee, and the entire amount was applied to the sectarian Italian Home in Wesley Avenue.

As they saw their hopes crumble to the ground it was only natural that the Sisters should feel downcast, but faith speedily resumed her control. If the work they had undertaken was God's work, it would succeed; if it was not then they were ready to relinquish it. Yet so manifestly was it God's work that they became convinced that a Divine purpose was operating through this failure. Who thus meets the blow of adversity is never conquered. When the Sisters went to report their second failure to Father Mackey, he took up a blank-book, and leaving a space above for the archbishop's signature, wrote down his name for a certain sum of money, bidding the Sisters, after

obtaining the archbishop's permission, go out and solicit funds to the amount of two thousand dollars. The archbishop not only commended the plan but headed the list with a generous gift, and thus was founded the aid society of the Santa Maria Institute, known as the "Willing Workers." Some of the most prominent families of Cincinnati were among its first members, among whom may be mentioned Mrs. John Leverone, Miss Mary Hart, Mrs. Frank Fox, Mrs. Joseph Sturla, Miss Alice Butler, Mrs. Albino Gorno, Miss Margaret Smith, Miss May Butler.

The "Willing Workers" were made up of active and honorary members. The latter paid an annual fee, while the former, besides paying the fee, gave their services to the Institute. It is, under God, to these active members that the Sisters owe much of the success that has crowned their work. It was they who followed up the visits of the Sisters to the homes, gathered in the children for the school, the catechism classes, and assisted with religious instructions. They opened a sewing-class for girls at Holy Trinity, to which was later added a class for mothers, while another sewing class for Italian and Syrian girls was opened in the East End. The ladies also assisted in visiting the hospitals and prisons and the sick in their own homes, and were the means of accomplishing much good among all creeds and nationalities.

The Sisters at first resided in Fifth Street, with their Sisters who then taught the boys of St. Xavier Parochial School. Now they transferred their residence from the Fifth Street house to the Sisters' house in Richmond Street, and twice a

day they walked the distance between it and Holy Trinity school. They had no income for their work. Sometimes Mother Mary Blanche or other thoughtful members of their own community, or a charitable-minded lay person, would give them carfare, but usually their pockets were empty, and where duty called them they went afoot. When a case was to be helped they appealed to some institution or a wealthy individual. Silver and gold they had none; all they had was their service, and that they gave as fully and readily as the more highly dowered Apostles dispensed their power.

It is significant of the wider scope which Providence designed for their work that the first case they assisted was a Negro. He had married a fallen-away Catholic white woman, and the Sisters found him in his dying hour. As the degraded woman wanted to be reconciled with the Church, he desired baptism and these spiritual ministrations the zealous priests of Holy Trinity Church hastened to render. The usual distress which death brings to the poor and friendless was in this home, and one of the Sisters then took a step which won for her a noble friend. She had frequently observed a woman in deep mourning at the morning services in Holy Trinity Church and this stranger she approached to beg some clothes for the needy woman. Thus was Mrs. Joseph Verkamp introduced to the work of the Sisters, while the poor wife followed her husband's body to the grave in a suitable garb.

When the first Christmas came the Sisters provided a Christmas tree for their pupils and for all the Italian children they could find. Father



Albrinck, whose interest in the work never waned, placed the school-hall at the disposal of the Sisters for the occasion, for which Mr. Leverone gave the tree. Mother Mary Blanche donated a supply of prayer-books, and following her example the Sisters have each Christmas made it a practice to include articles of devotion among their gifts to the children, with the result that practically every Italian home has a crucifix, holy picture and other emblems of Catholic devotion. The Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of Notre Dame also generously remembered the little Italians. Mrs. Leverone gave a large supply of candy, Mr. Delsignore five dozen boxes of figs, and the business houses made contributions. In connection with the tree the pupils rendered a musical and literary program, assisted by a club of boys and girls from Glendale, former music pupils of Sister Blandina, who were interested in her new work among the Italians. A tableau of the Nativity was presented, and the little lads representing the adoring angels looked as if they had just descended from Heaven. The applause with which they were greeted aroused the apparently sleeping infant, and caused him unexpectedly to raise his head and look around on the people, which was so perfectly natural that the audience was in raptures. The tableau was beautiful and presented a decided contrast to the memorable scene in Holy Trinity Church on the morning of October the eleventh, for now the same little urchins were literally changed into angels. Archbishop Elder was present and his delight in the progress of the work was evident in the fatherly address which he

delivered to the children and their parents. Father Alussi and Father Albrinck also spoke. The Christmas celebration was an event in the Italian colony, and added considerably to the popularity of the school among the children.

By the spring of 1898 there were 119 pupils in regular attendance. The manner in which the new school had gained upon them in a few months began to alarm the proselytizers, but they realized the futility of any further attempt to regain their influence over the parents of their former pupils, and their fear that their much-heralded mission would eventually be destroyed, caused them to throw off their disguise and come out as open enemies of the Sisters' work. With a list of the names of the children formerly enrolled in their school but now attending that of the Sisters, they called on the truant officer and stated that these children were either out of school or in one not regularly conducted, whereupon he notified the parents to send their children back to school or suffer the consequences. The alarmed and excited mothers besieged the Sisters, nor could their reassurance entirely quell the storm that had been raised.

Immediately the Sisters called upon the official, who explained that he had acted in good faith. The Sisters suggested that an investigation by him should have preceded his action, which was manifestly unjust toward them and the patrons of the school they were conducting, which, they informed him, was a regular parochial school. The gentleman realized that he had blundered and that the effects of that blunder might be far-

reaching. He apologized and promised immediate relief for the situation. The Sisters asked him to visit their school, which he did the following day, when, finding it all that the Sisters had claimed for it, he publicly expressed regret for his action, and assured the children that no one could interfere with them. He had a second list of names from the proselytizers, which he showed to the Sisters, and finding that all the children named thereon were attending the school, he congratulated himself that he had taken no action on their cases.

When the incident got abroad it aroused resentment, and some persons felt that there should be a public exposure of the attempt to withdraw the Italian children from their school, but the Sisters sought to prevent this. True followers of the Master, they desired to promote peace and good will among all people, and readily forgave the act of their enemies, and as events showed, good again came out of ill. Their school had been commended, which naturally carried weight with the parents, some of whom doubted if they were doing the best thing for their children in withdrawing them from a long established school in order to send them to one which might prove only an experiment. Furthermore it revealed as nothing else could the true character of the Methodist Mission. The Italians learned that it was the perversion of their faith which was chiefly sought by their Protestant friends. Italian indignation goes far when fully aroused, and in this instance it swept many children to the Sisters' school and many of their parents to Mass on Sunday.

"What so rare as a day in June?" the poet sings. June twelfth, of the year 1898, was rare indeed for the two Sisters, when they saw their first class of First Communicants approach the altar to receive the Bread of Life. In preparing the children, the Sisters were greatly assisted by Rev. Augustine Fortman, assistant pastor of Holy Trinity, who, when he learned that a number of Italian children who were working could not receive the desired catechetical instructions owing to the rule which forbade the Sisters to go abroad in the evening, opened a night class and continued that labor of love during his stay at Holy Trinity, a work which was zealously carried on by his successors in the curacy, Rev. Joseph Sund and Rev. Herman Santen. Rev. Joseph Quadranti, assistant pastor of Sacro Cuore Church, also aided the curates of Holy Trinity in this work.

The first class of First Communicants numbered twelve boys and five girls. The church was packed to the doors that Sunday morning. Possibly there were some present who had ceased to attend religious services, whose eyes grew dim as the children passed in solemn order to the communion railing, while memory recalled a similar scene in their own lives. After the services, Mrs. Bricchetto entertained the First Communicants with a breakfast, she and her two daughters, Misses Philomena and Lottie, serving the children. Never did their hospitable home receive happier or worthier guests, bringing with them as they did the presence of the Lord. After High Mass the class was confirmed by the archbishop.

With the children was confirmed the Sisters'

second convert, Mrs. Poli, another of the many instances of God's mercy which the missionary meets in his or her work. She was an American who had married an Italian, and years before she had met Sister Justina at Trinidad, Colorado. She had always felt drawn toward the Church but had hesitated to approach a priest for instruction, but before any progress could be made toward her conversion, the family left Trinidad and when the Sisters opened the Santa Maria Institute they were living in Cincinnati.

Mrs. Poli fell ill, and a relative of hers called on the Sisters and asked them to visit the sick woman, and not let her die out of the Church. As the case appeared urgent, though it was pouring rain, Sister Justina went with the relative to Mrs. Poli, who recognized her friend of other days. After a joyous greeting, the Sister said: "Mrs. Poli, you are the only one of your family who does not belong to the Church. Would you not like to be a Catholic with the rest?" "Yes, indeed!" she replied, with fervor. "Well," added Sister Justina, "here is a catechism. Study it, and I will help you." Mrs. Poli recovered, was instructed and duly received into the Church.

In a conversation with the Sisters, several months after her conversion, she said: "I should never have become a Catholic if you had not asked me. For a long time I had yearned to belong to the Church, but I did not know how to go about it. I dreaded to ask anyone, even my husband. When you broached the subject it was a great relief to me and now I am so happy!" The Sisters deduced an important lesson from the

conversion of this woman who wanted to be a Catholic, but did not know how to go about it. There are many such well-meaning persons who would gladly study the doctrine of the Church and being convinced of the truth, enter it if they were asked to do so. What an opportunity for us all! Mrs. Poli lived a practical Catholic life for many years and died fortified by the sacraments of the Church and visited in her last illness by the same Sister who had given her the catechism to study.

The afternoon of the June Sunday which witnessed the reception of the Holy Eucharist and Confirmation by the Sisters' first class of children also saw effected the organization of the Sacred Heart Society for the boys and the Children of Mary for the girls. The charge of the former was assumed by Sister Blandina, the latter by Sister Justina. It was truly the planting of fruitful grain, for the societies have caused the faith to flourish among Cincinnati Italians. The Sisters have ever regarded these two organizations as the apple of their eye and their zeal in this direction has been well rewarded, for by means of them, the girls and boys are safeguarded during a dangerous period of life. With pardonable pride the Sisters have seen their girls unite with the Married Ladies Sodality, their boys become fervent members of the Holy Name Society—both a credit to the Church and State, faithful in all the duties of their calling.

And among the first little band, the Santa Maria Institute has ever found aides upon whom it could rely. We may mention one of them, Alvino Zanoni, Esq., who after a brilliant college career,

was within a year of his admission to the bar, made assistant prosecuting attorney of Cincinnati. From the religious direction given him by the Sisters, he has never swerved. He is at present a member of the Santa Maria Advisory Board, and maintains a deep interest in everything affecting the Italians of Cincinnati.

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## Chapter IV—The Desired Home in Sight— Work Among the Syrians—Bitter Disap- pointment at Loss of Desirable Site

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**T**HE Sisters closed their school for the summer vacation with a deep sense of gratitude to God for the success it had attained, for not only had the number of pupils increased, but there had been marked progress in their studies and improvement in their manners. The contrast between the Sisters' pupils and those of the proselytizers had an effect on the minds of more thoughtful parents of the latter, and they began to realize that the path of duty might likewise be the path of good sense. That little band of school children proved a powerful aid in establishing the work of the Sisters among their countrymen.

Negligent parents expressed their changed sentiments to the Sisters, whose work of visitation of the homes during the blistering days of that Summer of 1899 was lightened by such words of commendation. It was a common thing for a father to say to them: "I have been helping the Methodist school, now I will help yours," which meant that besides patronizing the school he would cause his relatives and friends to do likewise.

The work of the Sisters was not entirely confined to the Italians, but embraced other foreigners as well, the need of help being all that the Sisters considered. Among the many newcomers who had made instant appeal to their sympathies were the Syrians and Arabians who were now en-



tering Cincinnati in numbers. The most widely severed of all foreigners from their new environment, since even the Rite of the Church was different from their own, they could not fail to excite pity and interest. The visits of the Sisters were perhaps the only indication they had received that thought of their spiritual or material condition had crossed the mind of a single human being in the great city. The gratitude of the Italian is proverbial, but it is not surpassed by the gratitude and unquestioning trust of these dark-skinned children of the Orient. The Sisters brought to them their first message of hope. They were reminded that they must not lose for their descendants the precious faith which centuries of Turkish persecution could not destroy, that they must send their children to the parochial schools, go to Mass themselves and frequent the Sacraments, for they were welcome in both Church and school. Thus spoke the Sisters, and the quiet faces lighted up with smiles, and the drooping spirits shook off their gloom. Several of the children were entered at the Sisters' own school, others sought admission into the parochial schools adjacent to the Oriental colony. Until the coming of a priest of the Maronite Rite, according to which these people worship, the Oriental Catholics experienced the solicitous care of the Santa Maria Institute, which still maintains its friendly interest. The new pastor, Rev. Tobias Daddah, found in the Sisters ready assistants in the work of assembling his people into a congregation, to which the Church of the Atonement was assigned as a place of worship.

Each day's work showed the Sisters the necessity of a house of their own. The needs of the people among whom they worked were great and varied, nor were they always of the soul. Not all of those they met were selling their birthright for the mess of pottage, but in the midst of conditions making for the revolt there were deeds of heroism, of sacrifice, of unquestioning faith which left the Sisters bowed in admiration. To reach out a hand to those brave and loyal souls, to help them out of the hardships of their lot, to bring something into their barren lives—this wish tortured the Sisters, because of its seeming hopelessness. A neighborhood house, a day nursery, a kindergarten, club-rooms, a corps of trained workers—O, fair and foolish dream, when they had not even carfare in their pockets!

And yet, before half that Summer was past, the desired home was in sight. It was a piece of property that surpassed even their dream, the Levy homestead, which had been one of the handsomest houses of the West End, when that section of the city was a wealthy residential district. Fronting sixty-three feet on Eighth Street, east of Cutter Street, and extending to Ninth Street, it possessed a building erected at a cost of seventy-five thousand dollars. Hand-carving adorned the woodwork of solid mahogany and the brush of the artist beautified the walls of the stately rooms.

At first the Sisters viewed it only from without, entertaining their dream, till their common sense brought them up with a jerk, to face the realization that although the street might have deteriorated residentially, such a piece of property was

beyond their hopes. Still the idea persisted, and at last they decided to gratify their curiosity by inspecting the interior of the house, with which object they called upon the agent, who was well pleased at the request and accompanied them. The beauty, the spaciousness of the house enchanted the two homeless Sisters, and they saw in imagination the effect which these qualities would have upon the idealistic people among whom their labors were cast. Stifling in the squalor of their tenement homes they would find here room for their souls' expansion, the very walls would speak of hope. Here, in what the Sisters had to offer, they would find a bridge to carry them across the gulf of despondency, out of the place of ignorance and poverty and their consequent evils.

By the time the Sisters had finished the inspection of the house its desirability had increased. They made an offer of fifteen thousand dollars for the property, nor were they much surprised when the agent, without deigning a reply, turned toward the door, but having had the hardihood to make the offer, they followed it up with argument to prove that he would do well to accept it, pointing out that no one with fifteen thousand dollars to invest in a home would put it in West End property, especially in that particular vicinity. Their work was for the poor and the sinful, hence the place suited them admirably; and while this offer might not be what the property was worth, it was still more than any one else would give. But the agent remained unconvinced, and parted from the Sisters.

The Sisters now knew that they wanted that house, wanted it badly, whereupon they redoubled their prayers, and since their trust was in Divine Providence they were not wholly surprised when negotiations for the purchase of the property were opened up and their price was accepted. At the request of the Sisters Father Mackey visited the house and advised them to close the deal, offering to aid them. The Sisters could hardly realize their good fortune. Within a year they had secured a home, and such a home! They named it the Santa Maria Institute and began to make plans for the enlargement of their work. It was decided that Holy Trinity school would be continued, while at the Institute catechism classes would be opened for children attending the public schools, and for working boys and girls. There would also be classes in music and embroidery and the languages, for those who could afford to pay, thus providing an income for the house. Other activities would follow until the Santa Maria Institute would be meeting the needs of the neighborhood.

But the cup of joy was only placed in their hands to show how good and desirable it was, for before it reached their lips it was dashed to earth. Events over which the Sisters had no control decreed that the property should be used as a city house for the Infant Asylum at Norwood, Ohio. This decision was a mistake from more standpoints than one, but the individual or aggregation of individuals who never made a mistake is rarer than the white blackbird. That the intention was good and charitable is unquestionable; that it was

misinterpreted and consequently criticized, is likewise certain. The mistake was remedied, and the property was converted to the use of Seton Hospital, and became one of the beneficent institutions of the city.

And the two Sisters, being human, they were struck to the heart's core, but being good religious they offered their pain and disappointment to God, and went on with their duties, but no longer cheered by the hope that had lent its wings to their feet.

As the Summer wore on to September, the Sisters, notwithstanding the intense heat, redoubled their efforts. It is doubtful if an Italian family in the city escaped them, and the co-operation promised by many of the parents was their reward. Since the work in the homes was as necessary as that in the school, Mother Blanche commissioned Sister Agnes Cecilia to assist Sister Justina in the class-room, thus leaving Sister Blandina free to continue her missionary visits. The interest which Father Mackey and Father Albrinck had manifested in the Italian children during the first year was now taken by other pastors in whose parishes Italians were living in large numbers. At St. Xavier parish school the Jesuit Fathers made provisions for the acceptance of Italian pupils, while Father Mackey did likewise at Springer Institute. In St. Edward parish, the pastor, Rev. James O'Donoghue, set aside a room for the younger Italian children, others being admitted to the various grades. As Mother Blanche was unable to provide a teacher for the St. Edward room, Mother Mary Bernard, Superior of

the Sisters of Mercy, which community has charge of St. Edward school, gladly agreed to furnish a teacher, Sister Blandina, visiting the school several days during the week to give lessons in Italian to those children who wished to study the language.

Thus, where a year before, the Italians were the undefended prey of the proselytizers, there was now a well-equipped school for them, and in at least three of the large parochial schools provision for their education had been made. And crowning the work of the two devoted Sisters for the year was the knowledge that the Methodist school in Wesley Avenue had been closed for lack of patronage.

The spirit of mutual helpfulness which they were fostering among the people was proving fruitful of results, for it not infrequently happened that one helped spiritually or materially by the Sisters became in turn the helper of another caught in sore straits. The Sisters made it a point never to ask the people for anything for themselves or others, but by occasional word and constant example inculcated the precept of charity. When an occasion arose many remembered their lesson, and out of their own poverty gave to help another whose poverty was greater. An instance of this among the children occurred during the second year of the school at Holy Trinity. One of the Sisters told her pupils of a family in the neighborhood, where there were three little children under six years of age, whose father was dead, and whose mother was very poor. The pitiful story was carried home by

the sympathetic children, and the following day each one brought to school a gift for the sufferers, some giving bread, others vegetables, many fruit. The offering filled a large basket which the Sister sent to the poor mother, rejoicing as much over the response of the children and their parents, as over the help she was able to give to the needy family.

On another occasion one of the Sisters was told that two little girls wanted to see her, and when she went to them she found one of her pupils, with a stranger by the hand. Very shyly the child, who had herself been baptized the year previous, informed the Sister that she had brought her little friend to have her made a Catholic too. Investigation by the Sister proved that the mother of the other child was a lapsed Catholic. The family was eventually reclaimed through the zeal of the tiny missionary.

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## Chapter V — The First Home of Santa Maria Institute — The Kindness of the Sympathetic Franciscan Sisters

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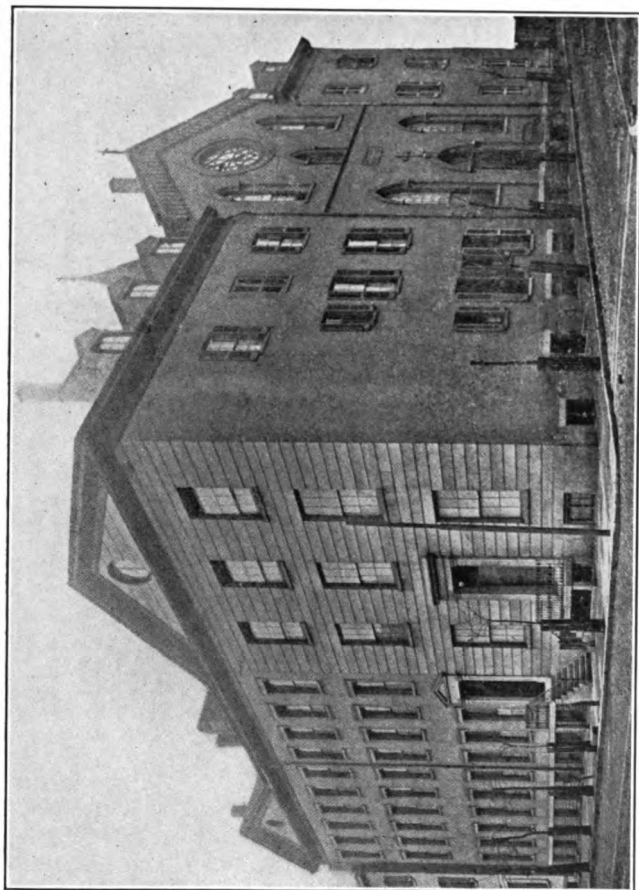
**I**N the sisters' vision of their work they always saw it not only backed, but largely carried on, by lay people. Many of its developments would be of a character which religious could not consistently with their rule of life perform with any hope of success and moreover, they realized that the hour for lay activity had struck. They found themselves rather alone in their belief, and except in well established rôles, it was a long time before they secured the assistants they required. A woman would gladly put aside her duties or pleasures to act as a companion to a Sister or instruct a class in catechism, but she shrank from accepting any responsibility in the work while the men felt that they had done their part, when they had contributed their money, yet active lay co-operation which had made the work of the proselytizers so successful, was vitally necessary. Well might the Sisters cry out their sorrow on seeing the adherents of error more zealous for its propagation than the inheritors of truth for its safeguarding.

But "he who can have patience can have anything." The Sisters had long been instructed in that virtue, and it stood them in good stead during this period of probation. Nevertheless they appealed incessantly to the educated Catholics of the city to rouse themselves to the work which



they alone could do. Here and there, they met with a response, and their training of men and women in the discharge of this duty, which they owe to the community and their less fortunate brethren, has been no insignificant part of the contribution of Santa Maria Institute to Cincinnati's welfare work, especially in its Catholic aspects.

The appalling ignorance of poor mothers in regard to the care of the home and their children is the cause not only of so much marital unhappiness but also of loss of health, and is largely responsible for considerable infant mortality. Criticism and blame have habitually been bestowed upon women for their failure in what is their essential work, as if the sex were naturally endowed with a vast supply of Divine wisdom which made the acquisition of human knowledge unnecessary. In the past decade we have so completely departed from this attitude of destructive criticism and made ourselves so truly helpful, such firm adherents of the creed that while one member of the community is the victim of ignorance, with the resulting sin, poverty and failure, all suffer thereby, that we can hardly realize the conditions which prevailed only a quarter of a century ago. Nor is it easy to comprehend the sense of hopelessness in even such high hearts as these Sisters possessed, as they faced the world of misery which the Italian, or rather foreign colony of that day presented. Women's clubs of any kind were looked on askance. To attempt to draw woman out of the home was regarded as almost sacrilegious. The club was the sacred



**SANTA MARIA'S FIRST HOME**



privilege of man, who spent as little time as possible in the home, and considering what so many homes were and that not alone among the "submerged tenth," one can hardly blame him.

We have already recorded the formation of a club for Italian mothers, but let it not be supposed this was accomplished by the mere suggestion that it be done. The Sisters had induced several Catholic women to interest themselves in the project, a room at Holy Trinity school being placed at their disposal, where there would be instructions in sewing, talks on the proper preparation of food, and the care of the house and the family, where, in addition, they would enjoy social intercourse, which was almost entirely lacking in their laborious days. Among the women who helped to inaugurate the Italian women's sewing club were Mesdames Mary White, Richard Mitchell, J. U. Sullivan, Albine Gorno, John Leverone, Frank Fox, and Webb, Misses Hart, Butler, Rogers and Wharam. The Sisters urged the mothers to attend, pointing out the advantages of membership in the club. Several members of the newly organized band of "Willing Workers," presented themselves at Holy Trinity hall on the appointed afternoon, bringing with them material for the sewing class, but none of the Italian mothers appeared, a circumstance for which there were various reasons. Some could not break from custom the outgrowth of ignorance, others could not leave their young children, but the chief reason was that none of them appreciated the benefit which the club offered and, therefore, made no effort to overcome the obstacles. The project was an at-

tempt to build without having first laid the foundation, and that foundation included, among other far-off things, a kindergarten and nursery, where mothers might leave their children without fear. Eventually, the sewing club was organized, but not until after years was it largely attended.

The second summer, through the interest of Mrs. Joseph Debar in the work of the Institute, the Sisters were able to send a number of poor mothers and children to the Fresh Air Farm at Terrace Park, where for two weeks they reveled in the country freedom, with its fresh air and good food, and the effect of the vacation was apparent. Every action for the betterment of any member of the colony naturally increased the influence of the Sisters with the grateful people, who realized that somebody was caring about them, and caring in God's way. Their realization of the duty of making a response grew daily stronger, and when the Italian school at Holy Trinity opened in September, 1899, one hundred pupils were enrolled on the first day, while an increase of Italian children was reported in the other parochial schools.

In the meantime, the fervent prayers of the Sisters for a home were close to fulfilment. It was not their own, nor what they desired, nor what their work demanded, but it offered possibilities for the development of that work which was impossible while the Sisters were but guests in another house. Moreover, the place assigned to them was intimately associated with the religious life of the city, from the day when the renowned convert, Mrs. Sarah Peter, had brought

over from Germany the first American foundation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, and donated to them her own elegant home at Third and Lytle Streets. With that other distinguished convert, Mr. Reuben Springer, the name of Mrs. Peter is rightly held in reverence by the Catholics of Cincinnati. Had she done nothing further for them and the city at large than to introduce these heroic, self-sacrificing daughters of St. Francis, she could be regarded as their great benefactor.

It is a fact, not without significance, that Mrs. Peter was the first to take interest in the Italians of Cincinnati, and that directed to the work one who in after years was to aid in carrying it to successful issue. While one of the two Sisters was still a school girl at the Academy of the Sisters of Charity, Mrs. Peter visited the school. Meeting the Italian girl, she spoke to her of the neglected condition of her countrymen and urged her to open a catechetical class for the children. The young girl obeyed and taught Sunday school in the basement of the Cathedral and, with her sister, labored among the Italians until both entered the society of Mother Seton's daughters. Among those in the Sunday school were the two Misses Gardelli. When, long years afterward, the Sisters came back to resume the work of their girlhood, almost the first to offer assistance were the Misses Sturla, daughters of one of the Misses Gardelli. Now in the Providence of God, the first home of the Santa Maria Institute was to be located in Mrs. Peter's old mansion, the building of a new mother-house at Hartwell, Ohio, having caused the Sisters of St. Francis to abandon it.

The Santa Maria Institute has had many benefactors in its quarter of a century of existence, but none are more tenderly remembered than the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, who gave it its first home and gave it with a generosity that breathed the spirit of "The Little Poor Man of Assisi." The two Sisters, on the advice of Archbishop Elder, went to Hartwell to ask the Franciscan superior for the use of some of the rooms in the vacant convent at Third and Lytle Streets. The day was intensely warm, and as the conductor took them a full mile beyond the convent station, the Sisters had to trudge the long way back. To the hardship was added the knowledge that they had spent their last cent for the trip out, and their spirits flagged at the thought of the thirteen miles that lay between Hartwell and Cincinnati. When they reached the convent the good Sister who admitted them was distressed at the appearance they presented. She would not allow them to explain their mission until she had made them comfortable and it was not until they were rested and were refreshed that she knew what had brought the two Sisters of Charity almost fainting to the door. On hearing their request for the use of the St. Clare Convent, the superior Mother Desideria, not only consented, but expressed a willingness to give the property to the Sisters for their work. (It afterward proved that the Franciscan Sisters could not legally do this, but they deserve credit for their noble offer.) Besides placing the building at their disposal, Mother Desideria promised to send workmen to clean the house and make it ready for the Sisters.

The interview was over, and the Sisters were anxious to depart, for the afternoon was waning, and they were a long distance from home to travel it afoot, but Mother Desideria detained them until the carriage could be ready to convey them to the convent station. On bidding them good-bye, she placed some car tickets in their hands, saying, "You may be able to use these." Good Mother Desideria performed countless acts of charity in her life but none more appreciated nor more needed than the few car tickets which conveyed the two Sisters back to Cincinnati on that memorable day.

With hearts filled with gratitude to God, the Sisters prepared to take possession of their new home. Friends made donations of household articles, and everything was in readiness for them, on Sunday, October 1, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, the date being suggested by the archbishop, as the work was under the patronage of the Blessed Mother. The Sisters arrived at the convent, but Our Lady plainly desired that her faithful son, St. Francis, should have a part in the honor of opening the house, whose work was for his countrymen. On their arrival they found that the kitchen stove was not in good working order, so the Sisters had to go back to their home in Eighth Street. On the following Wednesday, October 4, the feast of St. Francis, 1899, the Sisters were installed in their new home, which Archbishop Elder visited on the opening day, while many other friends assembled to greet the Sisters. Besides cleaning the rooms Mother Desideria gave several articles of furniture, Miss Margaret Smith



furnished the sleeping apartments for the Sisters and made many other valuable donations. Mother Mary Blanche, with her usual generosity, helped the Sisters in setting up their own home, and other members of the community showed their interest and affection. Another true friend of these first days in St. Clare Convent was Miss Rose Verdin, who went to live with the Sisters in order to assist them in their work. She labored with rare fidelity, relieving them of many responsibilities, and only leaving them to become in fact, as she was in spirit, a Sister of Charity, who has since proven a valuable acquisition to the Society.

The Sisters at first attended Mass at the home of the St. Xavier school Sisters, in West Fifth Street. Hurrying back to their home for breakfast, they would then start for Holy Trinity school in the West End, arriving in time to conduct their pupils to church for Mass. But in the course of time they reopened the beautiful chapel of St. Clare. They appealed to the Rev. F. X. Lasance, the well known writer and chaplain of Notre Dame Convent, East Walnut Hills, for a donation from the Tabernacle Society, of which he is spiritual director. He had been observing the Sisters' work and although their appeal came at a time when the distributions of the Tabernacle Society had been made, he assured them that their altar should not lack. On the eve of St. Agnes, January 20, 1900, a package came to the Sisters, with a note, which read: "This package contains everything for the celebration of the first Mass in your chapel, except the water." The Sisters,

knew that the friend whom Father Lasance had interested was Mother Agnes of the Cross, Superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and that the generous gift had left her own chapel the poorer. A chalice was given by the Rev. A. M. Quatman, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church, and on the following day Father Albrinck, V. G., celebrated Mass for the Sisters in their chapel. At last they had the consolation of having the sacramental King enthroned in their midst, their convent then becoming truly home.

Although the Sisters had a house, the question of its support was a vexing problem, for, of course, their work in the school and out of it brought them no income; rather had they to meet expenses for the pupils. But in their school work they had many consolations, and not the least of these was the extreme kindness that continued to be shown them by Father Albrinck, his assistant, Rev. Joseph Sund, and the Sisters of Notre Dame, who were in charge of the school. This hearty co-operation on the part of the pastors and Sisters encouraged and comforted them in many a time of loneliness and toil, and the memory of it is fondly cherished.

To increase the membership of the "Willing Workers" was one of the means of supplying an income, the giving of entertainments another, appeal to the charitably disposed, still another, but all were uncertain, unpleasant, and greatly retarded the work of the Institute. There was, however, no other way, for while the proselytizers had lavish means at their command, the Sisters were as poor as the people they were

to assist. Their treasury was always so near depletion, that the Sisters often found Prudence conspiring against Charity, and when Prudence failed, Charity would disclose her hidden hand, offering them the promised hundred-fold. One day a poor woman, peddling soap, called at the door. The Sister did not need any soap and she did need the few pieces of money in her purse. Still the woman pleaded: "I am poor, Sister. Buy some. God will reward you," whereupon the Sister gave her the money. Within an hour another woman called and put a five-dollar gold piece into the Sister's hand, a thank offering for a favor received. Cast your bread upon the running waters, after many days it will return to you, counsels Holy Writ, and in innumerable instances the Sisters have seen this promise literally fulfilled.

Their reliance on Divine Providence and the certainty of the reward often steadied the wavering faith of others. One day a friend complained to one of the Sisters that she was losing her confidence in the promise of Christ that whosoever asks shall receive. The Sister opened her pocket-book and showed her friend its contents, a five-cent piece. "That," said the Sister, "is all the money we have in the house. As tomorrow is Saturday and special duties will compel us to remain at home, we shall have no opportunity of meeting any of our benefactors; yet I am absolutely certain that God will send us means to provide food and other necessities until Monday. I will let you know the result of our trust in His Providence."

On Saturday morning, an old gentleman who delighted in gardening, presented himself at the Sisters' door, with two baskets, one filled with fresh vegetables, the other piled high with fragrant flowers: "For soul and body, Sister," he observed, making his offering. Later in the forenoon a young woman called. "I have been wanting for some time to make a little donation to your work," she said to the Sister, and laid a twenty-dollar gold piece in her hand. Nor was the Sister surprised, for He who feeds the ravens and considers the lilies will fail no human child who rests on Him with the confidence of bird and flower.

Though their poverty was a handicap, they accomplished wonders in spite of it. Doubtless, discipline was needed to test their work, as only gold stands the fire. There is nothing wonderful in accomplishment when the way is made smooth for us; the miracle is to succeed when we find ourselves opposed and thwarted, or ignored and neglected. For every inch of ground gained, the Sisters had to fight against poverty and indifference, against ignorance and cupidity, against wealth and influence. But they steadily gained ground, and the proselytizers were at their wits' end to hold their own against them. The failure of their school had persuaded them not to attempt to reopen it, but they maintained a kindergarten which gladly received Italian children, and a Sunday school to which many were drawn by gifts.

In the fall of 1889, the proselytizers tried to start a church at Park and Carlisle Avenues, for which purpose they went among the Italians.

promising them new clothes and other things if they would attend the services. When this did not succeed a call was issued to the more prominent Italians to attend a meeting in order to discuss matters of interest to the Italian colony. Unsuspecting any deception, a number responded, and when an apostate Italian who had become a minister, appeared and began to deliver an anti-Catholic sermon, the indignation of the Italians was great. "We did not come here to hear you," they said to him, and left the place.

But this unfortunate man was determined not to be thwarted, and opened a mission in lower Race Street, which attracted a number of the Italian youths, who were anxious to learn the English language, for the proselytizers always cloak their motive under the proffer of material help. When the bond of fellowship between teachers and pupils seemed sufficiently strong, the minister undertook to deliver a sermon, in which as usual priests were reviled and confession called the first step toward hell. Young Italy saw that it, too, had been ensnared and when the boys rose in their wrath the minister left at once.

To offset this work among the boys, the Sisters realized the need of a night-school. The Rev. Joseph Sund, assistant pastor at Holy Trinity, offered to open one, and assisted by Mr. Parker and others, the classes were begun at Holy Trinity school and were well attended—thus proving anew that save in exceptional cases, the Italians did not willingly concert with the enemy. When the Church gave the opportunities they required, they grasped them.

Every effort put forth by the proselytizers meant an increase of work for the Sisters, for there were many unstable souls among the foreign element, many still indifferent, and until this stage of development had passed, they required constant attention. Therefore when the Sisters dismissed their classes, instead of returning home for rest and recreation, they turned to the Italian colony, and until darkness fell, might be seen treading their way through its streets and alleys, for the salvation of their people. A few hardened their hearts against God's messengers, but the rest, even those who had not followed the Sisters' admonitions regarding attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments, promised not to attend nor to allow their children to attend services at Protestant churches.

Nor when the attempts of the proselytizers failed could the Sisters relax their vigilance, for as soon as an opening appeared, they would recommence their unholy work. There were communities of Italians in widely separated parts of the city, besides those in the congested districts of the East and West End, and the Sisters knew many fears on their account. Still they durst not withdraw their weak forces from the downtown districts; they could only hope that the other colonies would not be molested until they had the more important situation well in hand, or until reinforcement should come.

The residence of the Sisters in the East End greatly pleased the Italians of the district, and the establishment of a school in connection with the Sacro Cuore Church was agitated. The Sisters

offered to furnish and equip the rooms and supply the text-books, and in September, 1900, the second Italian school was opened. At the end of the second week, fifty children were in attendance. The Sisters turned over their community room and dormitory for the accommodation of the pupils. Sister Blandina was temporarily released from the work in order that she might go to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to arrange for the opening of a hospital in that city, and Sister Celestia was appointed to assist with the Italian work.

The Santa Maria Institute had now a community of six Sisters, a home of its own, and was conducting two well-patronized schools. It had curtailed the activities of the Italian Methodist Mission, richly supported as it was, had brought back numbers to the practice of their religion, and had several hundred children enrolled in the Sunday school classes. This in its purely Italian work, but that never was the circumference of the Institute. The Sisters were regular visitors at the city hospital, the workhouse, the house of refuge and the jail. Women members of the "Willing Workers" acted as companions for the Sisters on their visits to the various institutions. They never went empty-handed and their gifts to the patients or victims of justice often made a way for the ministrations of the Sisters.

This brief summing up of the success of three years, shows the success of the Sisters, in spite of hardships and many disappointments. They had the Italian situation in control. Even though their duties kept them practically in the class-

room, they managed to make frequent visits in the colonies. The Italians felt that at no time were the watchful eyes of the Sisters off them; the Methodists were equally certain that their quick ears were ever alert for any movement on their part. The last days of the venerable archbishop were comforted by the knowledge that at least in his episcopal city the work of sectarians among the Italians was counteracted.



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## Chapter VI—The Work Meets With Recognition—Proselytizers' Activity Checked in the Florence Avenue Colony

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**“L**IFE is a burden, bear it;  
Life is a thorn-crown, wear it.  
Life is a duty, dare it;  
Though it break thy heart in twain;  
Though the burden bear thee down,  
Close thy lips and bear the pain;  
First the Cross and then the crown.”

In the annals of the Santa Maria Institute, which with many lapses between the dates, have been kept by one of the Sisters, that verse is inscribed at this period, with the comment: “The experience of the last few days is a realization of the poet’s lines. The one sweet consolation is that it is for God.”

This, the only complaint betrayed by her pages, as they tell of hopes deferred or brought to naught, of labors unappreciated, of failures that might have been avoided is instantly turned into a song of thanksgiving. For God were those long walks in heat and cold, leading them into the city’s labyrinths of sin and suffering, to institutions where human misery appalled them, to the schools with their pitiless tasks. For God the humiliations, the deprivations, the endless labor, draining mind and spirit and body. It explains why they “never turned their back but faced breast forward,” and explains their ultimate success. To save souls for God, to extend the King-

dom of God—that was the sweet goad that drove them forward when all within them was crying to quit.

And what we write of these two Sisters and those associated with them in the building up of the Santa Maria Institute may equally well be written of that vast body of consecrated women, who, through the length and breadth of this land begin and carry on the various works of mercy. In schools and hospitals, in asylums for infancy and old age, in the tender ministration to the sinful and sorrowing, in the various departments of social service, the one motive impels them—for God. We turn from the reflection with a new pride in humanity.

If, while the Sisters lived in the old convent at Third and Lytle Streets there came days that tried the soul there were others that amply repaid them for the pang. Among those radiant occasions were the visits paid them by distinguished Italians, lay and ecclesiastic; for a natural sentiment made sweet the recognition of their work by their countrymen.

One of those visitors was the Very Rev. C. M. Pinto, S. J., Provincial of the Western Province of the Society of Jesus, who, returning from Rome, stopped in Cincinnati to survey the Italian situation. He found the Santa Maria Institute struggling into existence it is true, but nevertheless at work—and he blessed it from his heart. He realized that with this institution and a zealous pastor at the Sacro Cuore Church the children of the motherland here were reasonably safe. The fall of 1900 brought the Papal Delegate and future

Cardinal, the Most Rev. Archbishop Martinelli, to Cincinnati. Amid the many honors showered upon the distinguished visitors, he did not overlook the Santa Maria Institute, and on October 8, with his secretary, the Rev. Dr. Rooker, the Rev. Dr. Pohlschneider, pastor of St. Paul Church, the Rev. Joseph Quadranti, pastor of Sacro Cuore Church, the Delegate visited the Italian school. The children showed their training in their good behavior, and Mgr. Martinelli expressed his delight in the work being done by the Sisters.

The following year came the Right Reverend Monsignor Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, Italy, who had been sent to the United States by the Holy Father in the interests of the Italian people, and had brought with him twenty-five Italian Sisters to open Italian schools in the east. He was in Cincinnati for Rosary Sunday, October 6, and administered First Communion and Confirmation to a class of fifteen girls and seventeen boys at Sacro Cuore Church. Following the Mass he held an interview with the Sisters and made many inquiries about their work. He promised to obtain Italian text-books for the schools and to advance a claim upon the Italian Government for four hundred dollars annually for their educational work. The following day, accompanied by the Rev. Francis Beccherini of Detroit, the Rev. Joseph Quadranti, pastor of the Sacro Cuore, and the Rev. J. C. Albrinck, V. G., the Bishop visited the institution. He expressed his pleasure at the progress of the work, and promised on his return to Rome to speak of it to the Holy Father, Leo XIII.

In anticipation of a big bazaar which friends had decided to hold for the Institute, the Sisters wrote to Queen Margherita of Italy, soliciting a donation for the affair. The gracious reply to the appeal came in due time, in a letter from Count Rozuadowski, Italian consul at Chicago, stating that Her Majesty had instructed him to forward five hundred lire in gold to the Sisters for their work. In 1902, Count Rozuadowski was in Cincinnati, and he and Mr. Charles Ginnocchio, vice consul of Italy in the city, visited the Santa Maria Institute. Both expressed their satisfaction with the Italian situation in Cincinnati and congratulated the Sisters on their success, but informed the Sisters that the expected donation from the Italian Government could not be forthcoming. The Sisters had counted greatly on this donation from the Government, for the support of their schools, which was a heavy drain upon them. The lack of money not only handicapped them, but the obtaining of the pittance upon which they had to operate, was a hardship, dissipating the time sorely needed for their more important duties.

A luncheon and bazaar were given for the Institute in November, 1900, and the net proceeds of seventeen hundred dollars was the largest amount of money it had ever had in its treasury. The Sisters were enabled to pay off some debts which they had contracted, and the balance was carefully expended as the calls of their work demanded. Prominent among those who helped to make the bazaar successful were Mr. Michael Mullen, Mr. Louis Frixione and Mrs. Frank Herschede.

Calls for assistance were now coming from many quarters. The Sisters' visits to the Work-house and City Hospital were opening a field whose opportunities were limitless. Cases came under their observation and demanded their help in the despairing cries of the soul. One of the first of these was a girl whom we shall call Alice, who had been found by the Sisters in Ward O, of the old City Hospital. Well-born and well-educated, she had yet strayed from the path of virtue. Repenting, she had sought forgiveness, but her parents cast her off. She lost hope and when she heard of her mother's death as the result of a broken heart, she grew desperate, and in the end came to Ward O of the City Hospital.

She sobbed out her story to the Sisters. She wanted to return to the ways of right living, but what could she do? She had no money, and of course, no friends. She could not take a position as a domestic, for she knew nothing of house-work; she could not support herself on the pittance then paid to shop-girls. The Sisters had no place to offer her, but in order that no soul might cry to them in vain, they rented a furnished room for the girl in a respectable neighborhood, with a pious and charitable elderly woman, and promised to obtain employment for her. A few days later, the Sister who had found Alice, received an urgent telephone message to call immediately at the furnished room, and wondering what new development of the sorrowful life-story she was to meet, the Sister set forth, with a companion. In the room she found Alice, hatted and cloaked, ready for a journey. On leaving the hospital, she

had gone to Confession and Communion, and had resolved to accept any work that would give her an honest living. That very morning two Sisters of the Good Shepherd had called at the house on business with the landlady, and Alice had asked to see them, and before they left had begged them to take her with them. They were to return for her, and she had sent for Sister Justina to inform her of her destination and to say goodbye. Finding her going voluntarily to the Good Shepherd Convent to which she had previously declared she would never go, Sister Justina was filled with joy.

In the pressure of the duties of the following days, Alice faded into the background of the Sister's memory, but a few months later there came a pitiful letter from the girl, confessing that she had left the convent, fallen into old ways of evil, been arrested and was now in the Workhouse. Till seventy times seven stretched the Master's pity and forgiveness, and His disciples may not set a limit to theirs. Therefore, to the Workhouse the Sister went and on seeing her Alice wept like a child. If the Sister would intercede for her with the judge she promised to return to the shelter of the Good Shepherd Convent, and another girl, for whom also she besought clemency, would go with her. When the Sister sought Judge Leuders, he told her that he would dismiss, even without bail, any one for whose good conduct the Sisters would be reasonably responsible. Alice and her friend were transferred to the Sister, who saw them confided to the care of the Good Shepherd nuns. This was the Sisters' first

case in reclamation work, but the furnished room held many another occupant. When the Santa Maria went eventually to its own home, and the Italian situation no longer claimed so much attention, work along these lines became a part of its ministrations.

In these first years, the greatest work of salvage was naturally in the homes, where tragedy often stalked as wild-eyed as in any hospital ward or prison cell. To have a woman, with an infant at her breast, declare that she must seek self-inflicted death as the only relief from her unutterable woe, to be called to the side of one who had attempted such a death—these were situations that made the tragedy of Alice grow tame, for where is a human being to find words that will save, when the lips of her baby at her breast are powerless before a mother's despair? Yet from some all but infinite deep, the words of saving would come, and on so frail a plank the crazed mind would cross to safety. Not once but often in many a dark room of those chains of tenement houses the eyes of angels and of demons have beheld the Sisters thus fighting fearlessly against the most evil passions of the human heart; their white presence, frail according to human reckoning, all that stood between a madman and fatal crime.

These pages do not fully record the story of the Santa Maria Institute. That would be impossible, for recitals that outstrip even the imagination of a Poe, would be out of place in what purports to be a history. It is enough to say that tragedies which made them ashamed that they had ever thought their cross heavy, have repeatedly flung

themselves across the Sisters' path, as through these long years they tramped through the slums of Cincinnati on their quest of souls.

But the gloom of many a day was starved by the goodness of human hearts, the beauty of human love, so often revealed to their sympathetic eyes. Here it was a man who refused to be parted from his demented wife and daughter uncomplainingly performing the dual work of making a living for them and caring for them. Again, it was an invalid, confined for years to chair or bed, with a wife or children accepting the condition in loving cheerfulness, and tenderly ministering to the patient, whose mute resignation to the will of God was beautiful to behold. For the Sisters to be able to bring something into the lives of such as these was truly a privilege.

Or it was the good disposition so frequently revealed by the non-Catholic parent in regard to the religion of the children, for the Sisters found that many Italians, especially men, had married Protestants, and with the Italian partner too often indifferent, the difficulty of reclaiming the children was apparently great. As a matter of fact the opposite was more frequently the case, and not only were the children willingly confided to the Sisters, but the Protestant often expressed a desire to receive instructions and eventually become a fervent Catholic. The conversion of Catholics from indifference and sin was likewise the result of the Sisters' visits and incessant prayers. Children brought to the saving waters of baptism before death claimed them; enemies reconciled, family troubles settled, situations



found, help given—thus daily grew the stream of benefactions loosed by the Sisters' work for the Italians. When the last hours of the day found them before the altar, and they laid their garnered sheaves at the Master's feet, well could they thank Him for the strength and grace that had sustained them to such purpose that their labors were not in vain. Among the Sisters associated with Sister Justina and Sister Blandina during these first years were Sister Marie Vincentia, Sister Marie Magdalen, Sister Agnes Cecilia, Sister Marie, Sister Mary Eulalia, Sister John Berchmans, Sister Claudia, Sister Celestia, Sister Realina.

The Sacro Cuore school continued until the Christmas holidays of 1902, when circumstances forced the Sisters to close it, all the pupils being then entered at St. Xavier parochial school, where the director, the Rev. Francis J. Finn, S.J., made them welcome and gave them every advantage. Today some of St. Xavier's best pupils bear Italian names.

The release from class duties left Sister Blandina time for the other work of the Institute, for which there was urgent need, for a recrudescence of proselyting activity was manifested. The unprotected outposts were now being assailed, and the Sisters hastened to their relief. In Florence Avenue and the vicinity there was a populous colony of Italians, and here the minister and his wife had opened a mission house. The tactics of the West End mission were repeated; attractive features were added, gifts were made, and the old plausible arguments were advanced to overcome any hesitancy among the poor people.

The Sisters began a house-to-house campaign, instructing the parents in their duty and warning them against the dangers of heresy. It consumes time and energy, but results proved that the best way to mould the whole is through the individual. None will deny the complete success of the Santa Maria Institute in its primal work of uplifting the Italians of Cincinnati and preserving the Faith among them, and this success is the result of work with the individual, either singly or in the family group.

The minister rented a room from an Italian family, where each Sunday morning, at nine o'clock, he and his wife assembled the little Italians for Sunday school. The Sisters went to the colony at half-past eight, and gathering a number of children, took them to the Church of the Assumption for Mass, teaching them catechism before the services. One Sunday while the Sisters were conducting the children to church, the minister and his wife appeared on the scene and demanded to know where they were going with his Sunday school class.

"These are Catholic children and we are taking them to Mass," replied Sister Justina. "I, too, am a Catholic," protested the minister. "You have no authority from the Church to teach these children Christian Doctrine," rejoined the Sister. "I don't need any authority," he replied. "Then, you are not a Catholic," said the Sister. After a pause the minister retorted with the old charge: "Some priests are bad." "There was a Judas among the Twelve," said the Sister.

By this time the children were ready to start.

As a parting salute, the minister cried out, "Sister, don't take these innocent little children to the priests! Take them to Jesus!" "May God forgive you, Mr. Castellini," replied the Sister, sorrowfully. On their return from Mass, some of the parents met the Sisters. "The minister will not come back," they said. "He was angry because we let the children go with you. You come now and teach the children." The Sisters immediately rented the room the minister had vacated and opened a class there on the following Sunday.

But when they were driven out of one place, the proselyters would straightway begin to operate in another, sustained as they were by the wealth of the Methodist Church. Every moment the Sisters could command from their other duties was spent in visiting the families in the West End and in Florence Avenue, pleading with their people not to wreck their noble heritage of faith, at the instance of the lapsed Catholics who performed their nefarious work for the salary paid them by the rich sect. "But," would say some of the people, who had also tasted the loaves and the fishes, "The minister does not speak against the Church, he teaches about God and to sing Italian hymns and other nice things." But the questions of the Sisters would bring up contradictory statements. One girl had been warned by the minister to avoid Confession, which, he said, was the first step to hell; another woman had been advised to remove a holy picture from her wall unless she wanted to incur eternal damnation. Some parents stated that they only allowed their children to attend the Protestant Sunday school so that the minister



REV. J. B. BALANGERO AND REV. J. B. CHIOTTI



could draw his salary, while some of the children went against their will, and would cry to be allowed to go with the Sisters. Even his own young relatives objected to having any association with him, and when one of the Sisters asked a little girl if the minister were not her uncle, she replied, warmly: "No, Sister, he is not. He used to be, but he is not any more."

The Sisters finally decided to take the bull by the horns and carry their complaint to the superintendent of the Methodist mission work in the city. Accompanied by Miss Emily Callaghan, a well-known teacher in the public schools, who was acquainted with the superintendent, the Sisters waited upon him, and by none were they ever more courteously received. He appeared to be unaware of the methods employed by the minister to make converts among the Italians, and expressed disapproval of such unethical conduct. Whether the Methodists experienced a change of heart or recognized that they were making no headway in their missionary work among the Italians, they finally dropped the minister and his wife, who left Cincinnati.

The Sisters realized that the best way to safeguard their people was to get the children into Catholic schools, and the leisure which vacation afforded was given over to a campaign in the interest of Catholic education, carried on in the several colonies. They found that the tuition asked by the parochial schools and the cost of text-books were what principally deprived the children of religious training. The expense was plainly impossible for many parents, while others

placed love of gain above their children's spiritual welfare. Only a second generation could change the condition in either case, and the Sisters, recognizing this, did the only thing that lay within their power. Pastors of the neighboring churches willingly continued to admit Italian children free to their schools, and making themselves beggars for their people, the Sisters secured books, and when necessary, clothes. Thus each succeeding September found more Italian pupils enrolled in the parochial schools.

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## Chapter VII—The House in Seventh Street—Closing of Holy Trinity School— Visit of the Apostolic Delegate

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**A**LTHOUGH the Santa Maria was established and was meeting with success there was a constant sense of impermanency, for it had no claim to either its home or its school. Conditions might arise which would deprive it of either or both, and the efforts of anguished days of toil be brought to naught. This eventually happened, and it appeared to the Sisters that there was nothing left but to close the Mission.

Had they been forced to take that step, they could have departed comforted by the knowledge that they had done the work assigned to them, for although poor and almost friendless, owing both their home and school to charity, they had nevertheless baffled the proselytizers at every move. In Florence Avenue they had driven out the minister and his wife and had rented for catechism classes the very room in which he had been accustomed to hold his services. In the other two colonies, as we have shown, the situation was well in hand. The Sisters well knew that the echo of their voices would not have died on the ears of their people before the proselytizers would return, but none the less they had accomplished their mission, they had closed the schools and churches established by the Protestants, and had roused the people to a sense of their duty toward themselves and their children.



The Rev. John Balengero was now pastor of Sacro Cuore Church. A saintly and zealous priest, he fully appreciated the Sisters' work and realized the need for its continuance and expansion, but in the face of parochial conditions he was helpless. The church was still burdened by debt, and his own problem offered many difficulties.

In the neighborhood of the Franciscan convent which the Sisters were occupying was the Lytle mansion, one of the celebrated houses of the early days of Cincinnati. It was the birthplace and home of Colonel Lytle, a distinguished Union soldier and further known to fame as the author of the poem, "I Am Dying, Egypt, Dying," which he completed on the battlefield, where with his life, he sealed his devotion to his country. It was now proposed by the city government to raze the historic house and convert its site into a park for the tenement dwellers who had taken possession of the former aristocratic neighborhood. As more land was required, other pieces of property were condemned for park purposes, among them the convent belonging to the Franciscan Sisters.

The situation of the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute at this change of affairs was truly pitiful. Like their Divine Master they could truly say that while the foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, they had no place for themselves and their work. The enemy had persistently dogged their footsteps and those who should have been their friends had stood afar off. Little wonder that the courage of the Sisters should sometimes be near the breaking point. In such an hour the Superior said to one of the Sisters, whose failing health

demanded that she be released from her duties: "You are not well enough to go to school. There is no one to take your place. I almost feel like closing the Mission." "Oh," she answered, bravely, "I wouldn't do that, if I were to die!" Not once only in the world's story has Aaron upheld the hands of Moses. There was but one thing to do: work on, pray on, and leave the issue with God.

The Sisters had about two thousand dollars saved toward the purchase of a house. In the summer of 1904, Father Balangero notified the congregation of the Sacro Cuore that something had to be done, for the Sisters must remain. Yielding to his determination in the matter, the trustees consented to allow the Santa Maria Institute two hundred and fifty dollars annually from the church fund, to which Father Balangero generously added sixty dollars out of his own private means. In October, 1904, the Sisters acquired a small brick house at 534 West Seventh Street. On the last day of the same month, the saintly Archbishop Elder entered into his rest, and with him passed the Institute's first and never failing friend. Called to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in a perilous time, he was allowed to witness the fruition of his long labors, in the rehabilitation of the venerable see, and the addition of many institutions of education and charity. One of the latest of these was the opening of the Santa Maria Institute, and it lay close to his apostolic heart. Succeeded by his coadjutor, the Most Rev. Henry Moeller, the Sisters knew that they had in him a friend as true and interested as his predecessor, as keenly alive to the necessity of their work.

The house cost six thousand and seven hundred dollars, of which amount two thousand was paid off, leaving the balance to be met in annual notes, bearing six per cent interest. Their only assured income was the three hundred from Father Balengero and the trustees of the Italian church. Even this, however, was a far cry from the August day of 1897, that saw them coming down to Cincinnati, homeless, friendless, with five dollars in their common pocketbook, to begin their work of saving the Italians.

The payment of that debt, with the maintenance of the work of the Institute, is a story of struggle and effort that literally consumed the time and energy of the Sisters, so sorely needed for the work which fairly leaped toward them during the following years. Public entertainments, supplemented by private ones in the homes of friends, brought in the greater part of the fund; donations which were never large, and the strict economy of the Sisters supplied the remainder. But the task of paying the debt was drawn out over many years, and hampered them at every step.

The Sisters took possession of their new home on May 28, 1905, and on the following June 13, the feast of St. Anthony, Father Balengero said Mass for the first time in the little chapel, and left the Blessed Sacrament. Four were present at that first Mass; Sister Justina, Sister Blandina, Sister Laetitia and Mrs. Mary Fugazzi. Mrs. Fugazzi observed that one of the brackets at the side of the altar held no statue. In the evening of the same day there came from her a beautiful

statue of the Sacred Heart, a companion for that of the Blessed Virgin, which had been mysteriously sent to the Sisters soon after they had taken up their residence at Third and Lytle Streets. Money to supply the necessities for the altar was donated by Mrs. Mary Freschard, so whatever their own deprivation the Sisters saw that the home of their Divine Spouse was at least provided for.

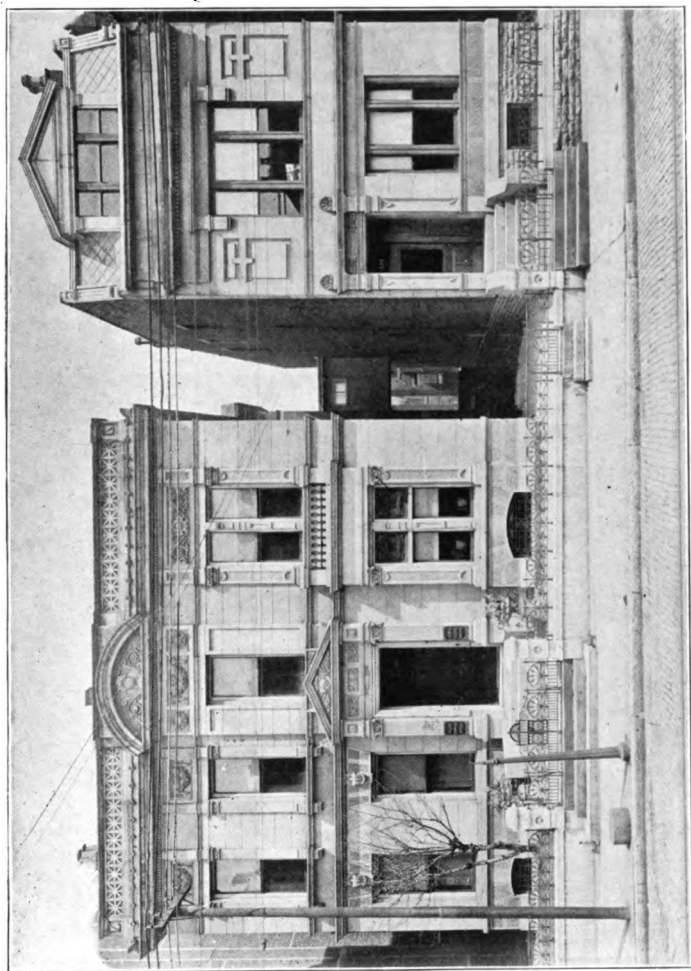
They had been in the house but a day when the first applicants for their ministration appeared. Two little girls came timidly, to the door, and begged the Sisters to let them live at the Institute, saying that their mother was dead and their father neglected them, a story which proved true on investigation. The mother, an Italian, had married a German Protestant. A third child, a boy, had been baptized in a Protestant church. The Sisters sent the younger girl to the St. Joseph Orphanage, and kept the older one with them. They sought the brother, and found him to be a good, sensible boy of eighteen, who was well disposed toward the faith of his mother and gladly consented to receive instructions. He was baptized conditionally, after making his first Confession, and received Holy Communion and Confirmation a few days later, after which he announced his desire to study for the priesthood. Not many receive four sacraments and offer themselves for the reception of a fifth, within a week, as was the case with this lad.

The new home was well situated for the work, and though small, it was the nursery of those departments which have developed the work of

the Institute, accomplishing untold good for human beings.

The promulgation of the new State school law, which requires two years of additional study after the completion of the eighth grade, affected the parochial schools to which in compliance with the orders of Archbishop Moeller, advanced courses were added. Thus it became necessary for the Rev. F. A. Runnebaum, who on the death of Father Albrinck in 1902, had succeeded to the rectorship of Holy Trinity Church, to withdraw from the Sisters the two classrooms which they continued to occupy for their school, a loss which deeply affected the Italian people and enabled the Sisters to realize how strong a hold they had gained on the parents. There was no alternative, however, but to close the school.

The Sacro Cuore congregation could not build a school, and the Sisters were equally powerless, but during its eight years of existence, the school had moulded American Italian thought in the city. It had proven the necessity and excellence of Catholic education, and though the trend of the times toward higher education had deprived the Italians of their own school, they knew the doors of the other parochial schools were open to them; and to the relief of the Sisters, many signified their intention of enrolling their children at Holy Trinity and other adjacent parish schools. Naturally the Sisters' concern for their pupils was deep, and they renewed every effort of early days in their behalf. When necessary, they supplied books and scured free tuition. In addition they obtained permission from the pastors to conduct



THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING



classes in Italian for those who wished to study the language. These classes were held regularly at St. Xavier's, the Holy Trinity, St. Edward's and St. Bonaventure's schools and at the Springer Institute, but on the whole they were not successful, few children caring to remain after the regular school hours. However, the work was continued for several years for besides the good resulting to the children in the study of the beautiful language of the motherland, it enabled the Sisters to keep in touch with them, and through them with the parents. Finally, however, the classes were abandoned, and the home visitation came to be relied upon, the release from the school-room allowing the Sisters more time for this feature of their work.

Scarcely were the Sisters settled in their new home, when they were honored by a visit from the Papal Delegate, the Most Rev. Archbishop Falconio, who was accompanied by the Most Rev. Archbishop Moeller, the Very Rev. John Schoenhoeft, V.G., the Rev. John B. Balengero, and the Rev. Leo Manzetti, professor of Gregorian Chant, at the reception held in his honor. Mgr. Falconio addressed the assembly, and expressed his joy at finding the Italian situation so well cared for in Cincinnati, declaring that upon the Catholic education of the children depended the future of the faith of American Italians. In urging that continued attention be given to this work, he expressed his full conviction that every effort in that direction would have full assistance from Archbishop Moeller and his zealous priests.

This visit occurred on September 11, 1905. On



the following December 4 the Sisters received a letter from Miss Agnes Lincoln, then residing in Rome, relating that on the 8th of September she had had a private audience with the Holy Father, Pius X. Mindful of the Sisters' work for Italians in her native city, Miss Lincoln had spoken to the Holy Father of the Santa Maria Institute, and begged his blessing for the Sisters, the Willing Workers, the pupils and their parents. This was granted, and a copy of the Papal Blessing, duly authenticated, was forwarded to the Institute. Miss Lincoln's sister, Mother Angela Lincoln of the Ursuline Order, who was in Rome, likewise took an interest in the Institute, sending a copy of the Italian catechism adopted by the Pope for the Roman province, which she thought the Sisters might also desire to use. Through the Society of St. Jerome of Rome Mother Angela also secured New Testaments for distribution among the Cincinnati Italians.

Thus had the work of the Sisters, by different avenues, been brought to the attention of the Supreme Pontiff, and in his blessing they found their zeal strengthened, their courage renewed.

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## Chapter VIII — A Record of Golden Deeds —A Busy Day—Practical Assistance from the Laymen's Missionary League

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**T**HE Santa Maria Institute was now entering on days which, although they were full to overflowing with work, carried none of the biting experiences of its probationary years. The security of a home had given it a standing, the people whom it was designed to assist felt in it a security, to the bewildered, the oppressed, the suffering, the sinful, the poor, it became a door opening a way out of these miseries. The Seventh Street house was small and the Institute suffered because of its cramped environment, but if its history were related, day by day, it would assuredly reveal an endless and golden succession of deeds for souls here and hereafter.

While two Sisters went among the homes on their never relinquished work of drawing children to the parochial schools and reclaiming the indifferent parents, another Sister, with a woman companion, visited the hospitals and penal institutions, the fourth of the little band remaining at home to minister to the cases which appealed directly to the Institute. Let us glean from the records kept as time permitted by one of the Sisters, the story of some of those days, and as we read, let us remember that the scenes are not laid on the outposts of civilization in frontier days where the Church was scarcely established and its priest seldom seen, but in the heart of a city

which was largely Catholic, and in the first days of the twentieth century. If we find this in the green wood, what may we not expect in the dry!

The stories are taken as they are set down on the pages that tell of some of the work of the summer of 1906:

"We called on several Italian families this morning. Mr. ————— we hear, is a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, a victim of proselytism. Nobody was home. We then rode out to Hyde Park to see Mrs. —————. She is not a Catholic, but is a good, sensible young woman. The baby is baptized a Catholic, but she is a staunch Baptist, and she believes, with so many outsiders, that it makes no difference to what church one belongs, so long as one leads a good life. When she does become a Catholic, she will make a sincere one.

"About three weeks ago a poor woman came to offer to stay with us and work for us for a home, and any little thing we might give her, for she was penniless and homeless. I am afraid she spent her money in drink. We find that her children were taken from her and sent to the House of Refuge. The boy is still there, but he does not even know that he is a Catholic. The authorities there gave the girl to some family, withholding the knowledge of her whereabouts from the mother. Lately she discovered that the girl, now grown, is living with a Protestant family in Norwood. She found her daughter in time to prevent her from being legally adopted by them. The girl has accepted the Presbyterian belief of the family. Previous to that she was a Methodist



**ALTAR IN THE CHAPEL**



**THE RED CROSS WORKERS**



like the people she was then living with. The girl did not seem to know that she had ever been a Catholic. This is a sample of the way poor dependent children are robbed of their faith in public institutions. The mother was told she had a right to take her daughter if she had a home for her, which she had not. We offered to take her here to stay with her mother, give her an opportunity to get a position, and we will consider the mother's service compensation for the daughter's board. We visited the House of Refuge in the interest of the boy. He will be given to the mother, if she has a place for him. We have asked Father Komescher to take him in at St. Vincent Home, till he is prepared for First Communion, for he has not received any instruction. No one knew at the House of Refuge that he is a Catholic, consequently he did not attend the Mass that is said there. We have also arranged to visit the Catholic children at the Refuge the first Sunday of the month, there being no Mass there that day. Our object is to encourage the children to be faithful to their religion and to make them feel that they have a friend in the Santa Maria Institute.

"We went visiting among the poor this morning. Our first call was on Mrs. ———, a young married woman, who is struggling to meet the expenses of the house and family on the eight dollars a week which her husband earns. We promised to get clothes for the three children from one of the sewing circles. Our next visit was to Mrs. ———, a widow. She has two sons, twenty and seventeen years of age. They

know nothing about their religion, nor can they read. We invited them to the Santa Maria, after their work, for lessons and instructions. The next visited was Mrs. ————. She had two boys, seventeen and fifteen, not instructed. We urged them to go to the pastor of St. Edward Church, which they promised to do. Our next visit was to the ——— family. They have a nephew, seventeen years old, who cannot read. We invited him to come to the house of evenings, for lessons.

“We heard today of a poor child who was dying, and went to see it. We asked the mother if the child had been baptized and she said it had not. She said she had no objection to its baptism, so we hastened to Holy Trinity Church for a priest. As none were at home, we went back and I baptized the baby. It died a few days later. A friend of the Institute made its shroud.

“We met an old-fashioned Protestant, who believes that the Catholic Church forbids the reading of the Bible, and that Catholics worship the Blessed Virgin and the Saints instead of God. Her husband is an Italian. She gave him the Bible to read and he was converted and became a Methodist right away! We explained all her misunderstandings of the faith, and gave her ‘Faith of Our Fathers,’ which she promised to read. Her children, four of them, were baptized Catholics, but she intends to raise them Protestants. However, she seemed to think that she had been misinformed as to Catholic doctrine. But she was decidedly convinced that the belief in Purgatory made Catholics bad, as they could commit any

crime, and yet be saved through Purgatory. Another proof that the poor ignorant people have all kinds of wrong ideas about the Church, and that many souls could be saved, by personal visits and explanations of Catholic doctrine.

"We met a young Italian woman who joined the Evangelist Church in Detroit, and was married by one of their ministers. She promised to come back to the Church. How easy to become a Protestant! If a Catholic gives up the practice of his religion, he seems qualified to make a good Protestant. What a pity that so much time and labor and money should be employed to destroy the true Faith! God help both victim and proselytizers! Two young girls are stopping with us for a few days. They are Protestants but told us their step-father is a Catholic. If the truth were known, it would show that the majority of families are connected in some way or other, with Catholics; and that thousands are falling away from the Church, not through malice, but carelessness—leaking away from want of some one to take an interest in them, perhaps.

"This morning we visited two unfortunate families in the same tenement house. The tenement is dirty to filthiness, with a bar-room on the first floor. The women drink and live in dirt, their poor little ones neglected, their husbands miserable. Their cases seem hopeless, for they think, or at least say, they are not to blame. We tried to advise the mothers what to do, but our words had no effect on them.

"Went to Price Hill, looking for a crippled boy reported to be neglected. No one at home. The



mother out washing. A neighbor told us that the mother, a widow, has a large family. Two or three of the children were taken from her, for neglect. She could not make a living and take care of them. They were sent to the Protestant Orphan Asylum. The boy we were looking for would not be accepted there, as he was lame. We went to the public school nearby and found him, but there was no sign of neglect about him. Though the father was a Catholic, and all the children were baptized Catholics, the boy did not seem to know anything about it. The mother is not a Catholic. We shall visit her on Saturday, when she will be home.

"We called on another woman, Mrs. ———, to ask for clothes for the poor. We found that she is a fallen-away Catholic who practised her religion until she was seventeen years of age. But her father and her husband are both non-Catholics, and she has been thrown into non-Catholic society, and she has lost the faith. She says that she will not join any of the sects, but she does not want to be a Catholic, although grateful for her early Catholic education. She will have her little daughter baptized in the Protestant church. Went to see another family, also fallen-away Catholics. She and her daughters will help us for the poor, but their return to the Church looks improbable, without a special miracle of God's grace.

"A young woman, a nurse at the City Hospital, applied to the Institute for lessons in Italian. We did not feel that we could spare the time, until we were made acquainted with the object of her de-



**THE CULINARY DEPARTMENT**



**GIRLS' DINING ROOM**



sire to learn the language. Often she has patients who are Italian and do not understand English, and she wants to learn Italian to be able to assist them, spiritually and temporally, for she is a Catholic. She will be given individual lessons.

"A poor woman has just been here to ask to have her sick child received at Seton Hospital. The father is a Protestant but does not go to any church, the mother is a Catholic, several of the children are not even baptized, but the father has promised to allow them to come for instruction, and he, himself, will go to the parish priest of his locality to begin his own study of Catholic doctrine. I often compare the daily work of the Santa Maria Mission with so many chapters in a fascinating story-book, only these chapters are facts; but we are too busy to do more than note them in writing here.

"Yesterday, though, was an unusual chapter. Let me see if I can recall the facts. Sister Blandina and Mrs. McFadden, a charity worker, though not a Catholic, visited the City Infirmary. Many of the inmates are Catholics. Sister was very well pleased with the care the poor receive. We shall make regular semi-monthly visits, hereafter, as much good can be done among the Catholics; though these visits have also a wonderful influence in many other ways, principally in removing Protestant misunderstanding of Catholic teaching, etc. In the afternoon, Sister Blandina, with Mrs. McFadden, attended a meeting to discuss plans for the better treatment of the children of the poor. Two Sisters, in their visits among the poor, received the promise of a woman, a fallen-away

Catholic, to come for instruction for first Holy Communion, so that she and one of her sons, who had not had any Catholic training but who has come lately to Sunday School, may make their first Holy Communion together.

“My portion of the work was this: went to the parlor to see a mother and her daughter. The daughter had entered the Ursuline novitiate, but the mother, who is a Protestant, raised so much trouble about it, that the nuns advised the girl to return home for a time. The mother is willing for her daughter to join the Santa Maria and engage in active charity work, for she sees no charity in education for which tuition is charged. I tried to explain to her Christian education is a grand system of the government of the Church. The whole trouble with the good woman is that she does not want to give her daughter up to the service of God, not believing in a religious vocation as God’s special call to the individual soul. She could not understand the Church’s view at all. She said: ‘Although I am a Protestant, I have allowed all my children to be baptized and grow up Catholics, because their father is a Catholic and it was his desire, although he left the matter entirely in my hands. My daughter engaged in some Protestant Church work a while ago and I promptly informed her father of it. Now this is what I receive in return—she wants to enter the convent and leave me and the family, who need her good example. But if you will receive her here, where I can see her occasionally, and where I know she is doing charity work, she may stay. I explained to her that this is a mission that the

novitiate and motherhouse are at Mount St. Joseph. I warned her to beware of the mistake of her life, in preventing her daughter from obeying the call of God. At last she came to the conclusion to let the girl stay here for the present, and she began at once to act as companion to the Sisters in their visits to the poor. Later the way may be cleared for her return to the Ursuline novitiate, where she belongs.

"Next came a young man to receive lessons in English, to help him to procure employment. Then came about twenty children for instruction for first Holy Communion; whilst I was at supper, there came a young man and his sister for instructions. They are too old to go in the class, at least they are ashamed to do so, so they receive individual instruction. The boy is nineteen, the girl seventeen. They had scarcely left, when two girls, at least sixteen years of age, came for instruction also. As they both work during the day we must accommodate ourselves to the time they can spare; take them then or we do not get them at all; going out to dismiss these two, in the hall we found two children for catechism class, one the child of a lukewarm Catholic father and a Protestant mother, the other a little Jewess, who wanted to learn what her companion was learning. Going to the door to let these two out, the bell rang for night prayers. So this is a part of one day's work."

The constant opportunities of preventing a falling away from the Faith, of reclaiming lukewarm Catholics, which were presented to the Sisters, made them realize how important and neglected

a work for every Catholic lay close at hand. The desire to call the attention of Catholics to it inspired them to establish the Santa Maria Home Missionary League. This organization operates along the simplest lines. There are no dues, no meetings, no obligatory prayers. The members promise to take an interest in lapsed Catholics, in young people who have not made their First Communion, and to visit these in a friendly spirit in the endeavor to bring them to the Church where they belong. Non-Catholics seeking enlightenment are also recommended to the solicitude of the League members, who are expected to interest their friends in the society, thus forming an endless chain of persons consecrated to the noble work of reclaiming Catholics and bringing the truth of our holy religion before those not of the household of the Faith.

The Sisters submitted the project to the Most Reverend Archbishop, who gave it his approval and granted an indulgence of one hundred days for the daily recitation of the prayer of the League, which is as follows: "Almighty and merciful God, who didst deliver Thy beloved Son to the death of the cross for the redemption of mankind, grant us the grace to lead such worthy Christian lives that by our good example and wise counsel we may be instrumental in bringing back to the bosom of Holy Mother Church, the souls of our brethren who have strayed away, either through human frailty or the deceit of the enemy. We beg this grace through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Amen."

Leaflets explaining the mission of the League and containing the prayer were printed, and distributed by the Sisters. The little leaves were so many small voices whispering a holy duty to the recipients, not all of whom, of course, hearkened. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The first record and the saddest question of fallen man, has been repeated down the generations. The Home Missionary League was intended to correct the indifferent state of mind of which it is the expression. The response to its summons resulted in many reclamations and conversions. By slipping leaflets into their letters, the Sisters and other members caused the knowledge of the League to be spread abroad, and requests for explanation and literature came even from other cities. Sisters in schools started the League among their pupils, pastors approved of its spread in their parishes, and the Catholic Press, that great constant and sadly neglected apostle of the Church, carried intelligence of the work. Since its approval by Archbishop Moeller, in March, 1908, the League has continued its silent work, some of its results being exemplified in the following incidents, taken from the Sister's records:

"Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ was baptized conditionally today. Her youngest child is to be baptized shortly, and her three older children are under instruction. Her niece, who was baptized a Catholic in infancy, but who was never instructed and never attended the Catholic Church, has been coming for instruction. Next Wednesday both will make their first Confession. This has been brought about by the Missionary League.



**"This morning three girls are to be baptized. When we first met the family the father was a Protestant, the mother a non-practical Catholic, a few of the children were baptized, the others were not. After the eldest girl came to instruction, the other children attended St. Patrick school. A few months ago the father asked for instruction, and he has since been baptized. Now the eldest of the family, a young man, is receiving instruction and the three girls will be baptized today. This family is another proof of the way in which many of our fallen-away Catholics can be brought back to God, by a little kindness. The beginning was the work of the Santa Maria Laymen's Missionary League."**

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## Chapter IX—The Story of a Conversion —How the Sisters' Zeal Led a Woman of Culture Into the Church

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**A**MONG the many converts made by the Sisters was Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, a woman of culture, and a member of a family which is well known in a Southern State for its devotion to the religious education of adherents of the Baptist Church. She has thus recorded the story of her conversion:

"I was born a Protestant and educated in that faith. My surroundings were all Protestant.

"My father is a minister in the Protestant Church. Yet strange to say, when urged to become a member of some one or other of the churches, I could never make up my mind to take such a step. I felt a void in my soul which I could not explain, a yearning after something I knew not what. I passed many weary years in affliction of soul, bordering on despair, as if life were not worth the living.

"I felt God was calling me to a more spiritual life. How I yearned to know what God wished of me! I pondered on the necessity of religion to bring me nearer to God. I thought perhaps I ought to join one of the churches, but which was the true Church? They all claimed to be the true Church but they all differed in their creed.

"From childhood I had felt drawn to the religious Sisters whom I occasionally saw on the street. The peace and joy reflected on their coun-

tenances gave me a desire to know something of the religion they professed. But I was dissuaded from any study of Catholic doctrine.

"From that time I made no pretence of religion at all, but drifted farther and farther away from the spiritual life to which God had called me. However I insisted on one thing, and that was to have my children baptized in the Catholic Church.

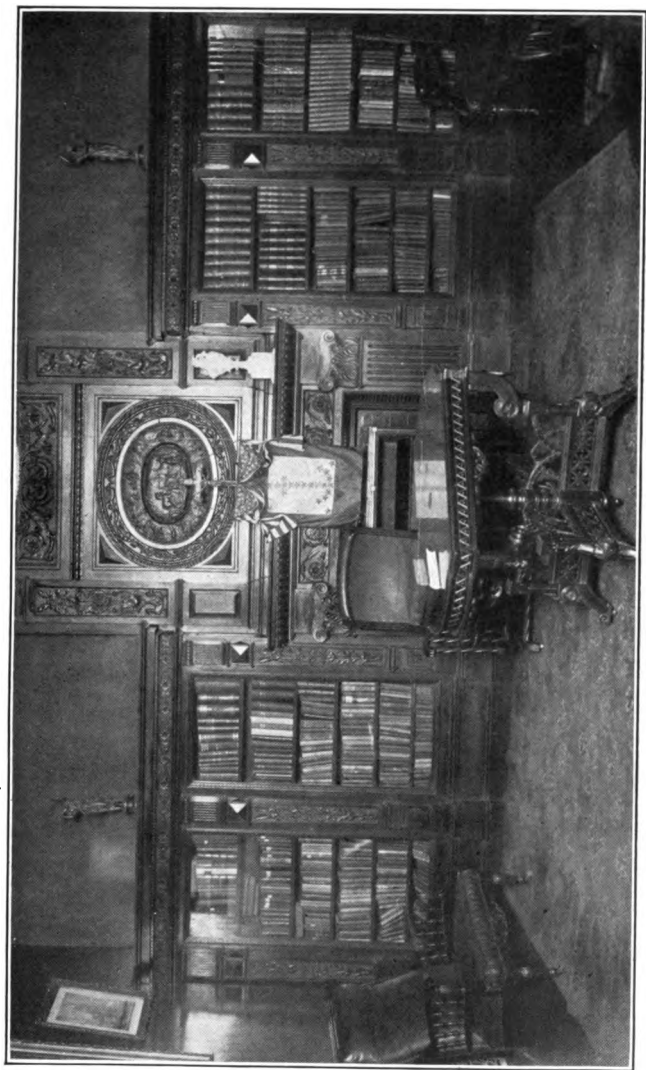
"Then the thought came to me, Why did you have your children baptized Catholics? If you are convinced that they will be better men and women in the Catholic Church, why do you not join it yourself?

"During all this time I had learned nothing of Catholic doctrine, nor were my children instructed in that Faith, yet how often did I slip into some Catholic church, and watch people come in for prayer and meditation and to enjoy the religious atmosphere that pervaded the place! What a peaceful feeling of nearness to God would take possession of me!

"God's ways are wonderful. Often a trifling incident is the turning point in one's life. One day a Sister of Charity came to my house to ask my elder son who was fifteen years old to join the First Holy Communion class. My younger son had been invited to Sunday School by a play-mate. From him the Sister learned of his brother who had been baptized but had not been instructed.

"I told the Sister I wanted my boys to be Catholics, that their father would not object. I then mentioned the fact that I was a Protestant.

"And why don't you want to be a Catholic your-



THE LIBRARY



self, if you are so anxious that your boys should be Catholics?" I laughingly answered it would not take much to make me one. 'Well, I'll send you some books to read,' said the Sister. Then taking my hand in both hers, she said earnestly 'Read the books carefully, but my dear child, pray, pray fervently to God to enlighten your understanding and give you grace to do His holy will. Knowledge alone will not enlighten you, but His grace will make everything plain to you. Without God's help we can do nothing.'

"The very next day the Sister sent me 'The Faith of Our Fathers.' I read it over and over again. After a few weeks I sent word to the Sister that I was ready to take instruction.

"Now followed a period of study and reading. Several times a week I went to take instructions. The Baltimore Catechism was explained to me. I read many books on religious subjects. My reading and instruction gave me great pleasure.

"As the truths of religion unfolded themselves before me, life took on a new aspect. God's plan in creation became plain to me. His Providence in my regard filled my heart with filial love for Him, and I longed for the moment when I could become a member of the true Church and prove my loyalty to Him by a life of good works.

"The conviction that the Catholic Church of today is the true Church of God came to me in this way. Jesus Christ the Son of God became man to redeem us by His life and death. He established the Church to perpetuate His teaching to the end of time. The Church that taught me then, must teach me now. The succession of the

Popes from St. Peter the first Pope to Pius XI, the present Pope, proves that the Catholic Church is the Church which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, founded for the salvation of souls, and to that Church I must belong.

"I had now found the true Church; would God give me the strength of will to be a practical Catholic? I knew more was required of a Catholic than of a Protestant. If family and friends turned against me, could I bear the trial? I humbly asked God's help in prayer and I felt strengthened to undergo any trial that might come to me in following the dictates of my conscience. Then I earnestly asked to be received into the Church.

"I cannot put into words, the joy I experienced as one after the other the devotional practices of the Catholic religion revealed their inner meaning. The Sign of the Cross which had appeared meaningless gestures to me, I found expresses the principal mysteries of religion, the Unity and Trinity of God, the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ. The Crucifix and pictures of angels and saints, of Jesus and His Blessed Mother, which I had heard were objects of superstitious worship, served to raise my heart to God and keep me in His Divine presence. The Holy Bible, which was supposed to be forbidden to Catholics, I learned is found in nearly every family, and the Bible History arranged to suit the capacity of children, is a daily lesson in the school-room. I also learned that we would have no Bible if the Catholic Church had not preserved it for us.

"I now understand how misrepresentations and calumnies against the Church have embittered the

minds of many men against her. What a pity such persons do not know the Church's history!

"I had heard strange things about convents. After I had been received into the Church, I was anxious to devote part of my time to works of benevolence, so I offered my services to the Santa Maria Institute conducted by the Sisters of Charity, by whom I had been instructed. This gave me the opportunity of seeing the inner life of a convent. The following is part of the daily activities as they came under my own observation.

"The rising bell rang at five o'clock, and prayers, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and Holy Communion followed. The first part of the morning having been devoted to the worship of God, breakfast was served, after which the household activities began. There was a nursery, filled with infants and little children, a kindergarten, for the older children, the resident girls to send off to school, the domestic science department with sewing, dressmaking, millinery and cooking, clubs for girls and their mothers, clubs for boys and night-school.

"To the convent came persons of all descriptions applying for help, advice, employment, home. They came with sad countenance, and left with a smile, for their burden had been lightened, if not entirely removed. The whole day was employed in works of benevolence and in religious exercises. Peace, charity and happiness reigned everywhere.

"Some of my friends have asked me why I became a Catholic. This brief account of my conversion is the answer."



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## Chapter X—Presbyterians Work Among the Italians—The Sisters Aid the Hungarians—"Lost Sheep" Return to the Fold

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**I**N their varied and advanced work in the Southwest, the Sisters had been accustomed to associate themselves with movements affecting Catholic interests, therefore when the Juvenile Court was to be organized in Cincinnati, the invitation extended to the Santa Maria Institute to be represented at the initial meeting was accepted. The presence of the Sisters drew attention. A prominent Catholic layman in greeting them, observed that it was surprising to see Sisters present on such an occasion. "You will often see us here," rejoined Sister Blandina, who was later appointed a probation officer by the Judge.

The Sisters had always earnestly desired the association of the laity with them in their work, and they now sought the aid of Catholic women in their juvenile court duties. The aim of juvenile justice being the reformation of the child in the home, and when necessary, of the home as well, the Sisters were unable to give this department of their work full attention, their other labors being too many. Hence, with the approval of Archbishop Moeller, the Sisters decided to form a committee to assist them, the first to respond being Misses Mary Schinnick and Margaret Ibold. Others whose interest was soon after aroused were Miss Grace Gilligan, the Misses

Koch, Miss Maria Kisselt and Miss Mary Williams. The first meeting of the Santa Maria Institute Juvenile Court committee was held August 5, 1906, and was presided over by the Rev. Aloysius Komescher, chaplain of St. Vincent Home for Boys and Catholic probation officer. From a small beginning the membership advanced until the Sisters had at their command a sufficient number to care adequately for the Catholic cases which came before the court. The women responded to the tactful instructions of the Sisters, and no organization had a more zealous and dependable body of friendly visitors than the Santa Maria Institute. To some it opened up an opportunity for a life-work, and eventually several of the Institute's volunteer workers became efficient probation officers.

Always working in conjunction with the various civic, fraternal and religious organizations of the city, the Institute showed itself to stand for whatever makes for righteousness, and between it and its associates in the great work of humanitarianism, there was always the fullest confidence and co-operation. In meetings for some mutual interest, a black-robed Sister of Charity, with a woman companion, may always be seen in attendance, and not infrequently it has happened that hers has been the voice which influenced a decision on the right side of some mooted question.

Scarcely a year but has witnessed some new outgrowth of the Santa Maria Institute, but the original object of the Sisters, the care of the Italian people, has never lost its hold on their interest. On the contrary this interest has increased in pro-

portion to the awakened consciousness of the race. Those first pupils of the Sisters were now reaching toward maturity. That pride of race which, when rightly held, helps rather than menaces American citizenship, had been cherished in this small group of Italian children, and it drew them into closer fellowship, inspired in them sentiments of helpfulness toward others of their common faith and blood. This feeling manifested itself in a desire to form a club for American Italian young men, and quite naturally the promoters turned toward the Sisters. Their response was quick and friendly. In order to save the new club the expense of renting a hall the Sisters offered the use of their dining-room which was a hardship, but they were willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of keeping the boys under their influence. Thirty-two members were enrolled, and the first election of officers resulted as follows: Moderator, Sister Blandina; president, A. J. Zanona; vice president, Harry Falloni; secretary, Frank Palmasano; treasurer, Agostino Cassini; sergeant-at-arms, Vincent Cianciola.

The boys' idea of a club did not go beyond entertainment, and that neither elevating nor instructive. The Sister-Moderator endured the performances for a while, then she gradually introduced new features. The first was a reading by a good elocutionist, which was well received by the members, and was followed by an illustrated lecture on the teeth, by a well-known doctor of dental surgery. The quick-minded lads contrasted the two methods of entertainment, and their own began to show marked improvement.

As the club would not accept boys under sixteen years of age, the junior American Italians, not to be deprived of the benefits and pleasures of such an organization, descended upon the Institute and demanded the assistance which had been given their older brothers, and the Sisters, well-pleased with the spirit they manifested, helped the lads to organize their club also. Within a few weeks, the girls fell into line, and a splendid organization for them was formed.

All the young people met at the Institute, and making ready for them, on various evenings, in their cramped quarters, with their many other duties driving them, entailed no end of labor for the Sisters. The activities carried on in the house, including as they did so much catechetical instruction and private lessons in English, had all to be so arranged as not to interfere with the clubs, for a gathering of young people, especially Italian young people, is no Quaker meeting, but the Sisters knew that their charges were secure while engaged in innocent amusements under their roof, their parents were equally at ease concerning them, and thus the good which resulted to all fully compensated for the trouble.

But to attempt to carry on their work longer in such confined quarters, was suicidal, in fact, they were beginning to lose ground. There were necessary works which the Sisters could not think of undertaking, since the house was scarcely large enough for the community and the women and girls they were sheltering until homes could be found for them. At the rear of the house were two small buildings which the Sisters moment-

arily considered buying and turning over to the clubs and other activities; but the debt on the place and the reflection that the houses would be at best but makeshifts restrained them. What the Institute needed was a modern, well-equipped home with library, club-rooms, gymnasium, recreation hall and all the other accessories demanded by advancing social service. It would take money, and the Sisters had none, but their trust in Providence was large. They laid the matter before the archbishop, and acknowledging the justice of their plea, His Grace gave them permission to seek the required aid.

The Sisters' plan was to solicit persons of means and Catholic organizations to become founders of the Institute by subscribing each one thousand dollars. The first to inscribe her name as a founder was Mrs. Richard Mitchell. Others who followed her noble example were: Mrs. Ledyard Lincoln, Mrs. Frank Fox, Mrs. Mary E. Fresch and Miss Mary Hart, Catholic Ladies of Columbia, Mrs. Patrick Farrell, Mr. Victor Cardosi, Miss Tillie Haas.

One society responded to the appeal of the Sisters, the Catholic Ladies of Columbia, a fraternal organization, which, through its local councils in Cincinnati, elsewhere in Ohio and in Northern Kentucky, raised the required amount. The Catholic Ladies of Columbia, with the Knights of Columbus, have repeatedly shown their interest in the work of the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute.

Another project was the formation of auxiliary societies, which would undertake the work of

raising money for the erection of a suitable building. The friends of the Institute met, formed the Santa Maria Auxiliary Society, and started to secure funds by the slow process of entertainments, for the day of drives and campaigns had not arrived. By the summer of 1909 the Sisters had in hand about twelve hundred dollars. Several buildings were offered to them, among them, Pulte College, but Seton hospital was finding the property at 640 West Eighth Street inadequate for its increased patronage, and the Society was considering the purchasing of the Presbyterian Hospital in West Sixth Street for the Seton. A site for the new Good Samaritan Hospital had been bought in Clifton, and the erection of that institution was in sight. This development of the Society in Cincinnati alone seemed to preclude the possibility of the Santa Maria Institute being permitted to incur any heavy debt; but, still hopeful, the Sisters and their friends continued to work for the new home.

For a period of about five years the Sisters had a respite from the proselytizers. The withdrawal of the Methodists from the field was a decisive victory for the Santa Maria Institute, as well as a distinctive honor of Catholic Cincinnati. When the Papal Delegate, Mgr. Falconio, was informed that no proselytizing was going on among the Italians of Cincinnati, the report was as surprising to him as it was gratifying, he warmly congratulated Archbishop Moeller and the Sisters on the unusual condition.

But new rumors of proselytizing efforts became rife. It was announced that an Italian minister

was soon to arrive from Rome in Cincinnati, there to re-commence work among the people. In the meantime, a young Italian girl from Rome, who had been sent by the proselytizers to the Cincinnati Deaconesses' Home for training, was going around in the "Gospel Wagon," preaching to the Italians. "Keep away from the priests. All they want is your money!" was the burden of her ministry, and on several occasions, indignant Italians, more forcible than polite, flung back the lie in her face.

Hitherto, the proselytizing activities had been conducted by the Methodists, but early in the fall of 1909, the Presbyterians entered the field. An Italian pervert from Rome was secured by officials of the Presbyterian Church and a mission was opened in Barr Street which was to cause the Sisters great trouble, but finally prove a crown for their work. Then, as a final trial, an Italian weekly paper, began publication. From the outset its tone was hostile to the Church, becoming more pronouncedly so as it grew stronger, at last openly aligning itself with the proselytizers. A room in its office was given to the girl missionary from Rome, where the Italian youths were gathered in with the dual object of teaching them English and undermining their faith at the same time.

Thus, after a lull the Sisters were confronted by three enemies instead of one, and burdened by a number of activities, none of which they could conscientiously relinquish, their visits to the institutions being not the least of these, for besides comforting the inmates, bringing them hope, offering them diversion, as was the case with the

women prisoners of the jail, whom they supplied with material for the making of aprons and other garments, they secured the pardon of many, and helped them and others whose terms had expired, to a new life, which liberated them from the temptations which were waiting to reclaim them upon their release. For it is a fact beyond doubt that the first offense of many a criminal would have been his last, if, at the prison door on the day of his release a true friend were waiting to receive him. How often as they led off some one thus saved, have not the Sisters heard the voice of the kind-hearted Judge or warden pronounce a fervent, "God bless you, Sister!" How often, in their long years of soul-saving, have they not heard the same benediction from the person thus redeemed!

In former times, the visitation of prisons and houses of reform was part of the work of the active religious orders, but we believe that with the exception of some work along these lines done by the Sisters of Mercy, it had fallen out of practice in Cincinnati, until undertaken by the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute, yet in that striking account which Christ gives of the soul standing to receive its sentence of eternal life or death, we find the prisoner mentioned among those who wore His guise on earth. And who, in the category of the afflicted, is more pitiful than the prisoner? Hunger and thirst and nakedness—yea, they are sad conditions; but nature is merciful, when man is not. The herbs of the earth give food, its running brooks drink, and the sun or the fire kindled from the brambles affords warmth to the body, but the prisoner is shut off from the ministrations



of nature, not less than of man. He may not want for food and drink and raiment, but who, given the choice, would not rather risk being deprived of these than of his liberty? What hunger is worse than heart-hunger? what soul so abandoned as the one that meets no human love and sympathy? And following the duties outlined for it by the merciful Saviour, the Church has set among her works of mercy the visiting and the ransoming of prisoners.

Assuming this as a part of their labors, the Sisters were loath to relinquish it, yet with the hydra-headed monster of proselytism again lifted in their path, they well might ask themselves which were the higher duties. Nor were the Italians the only foreigners who were receiving attention from the Institute, for Syrians and Uniate Greeks also were the objects of that care.

However, at that period the proselytizers were concentrating their efforts upon the Italians, perhaps because their perversion seemed to strike more directly at the Pope of Rome, perhaps because they simply yielded to the age-old appeal of the children of Sunny Italy.

To these had now been added the Hungarians, whose sadly neglected condition had been brought to the attention of the Sisters, and they began to visit the colony in the northwestern part of the city, where besides Hungarians they also found Roumanians, Servians and other nationalities of eastern Europe, of whom the majority, of course, were Catholic. Some attended St. Augustine and St. John churches, but by far the greater number did not go to church at all.

With a companion who was familiar with the German language, understood by many of the Hungarians, one of the Sisters took up the work of visitation. They found that the children generally attended the non-Catholic schools and consequently were growing up without any religion. The parents were poor, the father, usually a day laborer, was unable to support the invariably large family; hence, the mother had to supplement his wages by her own toil, either by washing at home, scrubbing buildings, or, when not completely tied down by a baby, working in sweat shops. There were home conditions that surprised even the Sisters, accustomed as they were to situations that outraged every sense of human decency. And those children growing up in that squalor and filth and immorality, were to be the men and women of the morrow, the citizens who would help to mould the future of the city and the commonwealth. They felt as one would feel trying to extinguish a fire with a cup of water. Well might Sister Justina write in her annals: "It seems to me, that God sends us, to our very doors, subjects for our missionary endeavors, and we Catholics neglect them. For the Hungarians are Catholics, and many of the other nationalities, too. Those who are Schismatics are so in ignorance. If a little church were built for them and a zealous priest were to go among them and Catholic training were given the children, even this little attention would save them to the Faith."

The Sisters did their part. They rented a room for Sunday School, and paid the expenses incurred. Miss Rose Harig generously offered her

services for work among these people. In the course of time a Hungarian priest came to Cincinnati to take charge of the Catholics of that nationality, and the Sisters withdrew from the field.

At any rate it was not long before the Sisters were made to realize that the Presbyterians meant business. Their new minister was in every way superior to the customary "weeds from the Pope's garden," so eagerly collected by our separated brethren. Highly educated and of magnetic personality, he employed his powers of mind and soul for the spread of his newly accepted doctrine, although what one of the Latin race could find attractive in the harsh doctrine of Calvin must puzzle the thoughtful. Under such a leadership and with ample means at their command, the Presbyterians of Cincinnati fondly believed that the conversion of the Italians of the city would readily be accomplished. It may be that the dwindling of their own churches explains this great zeal of the sectarians for the Catholic foreigner. With their own people drifting from them to Christian Science, Spiritism or frank paganism, and knowing it to be impossible to stop the leakage, they try to fill the vacancy by proselytizing.

A vacant Congregationalist church was taken over for the mission. It was a good building and standing not very far from the humble Santa Maria Institute, it offered by contrast, if nothing more, a splendid foil to the struggling Catholic house. This, it proudly proclaimed is what Protestantism has to offer to the poor neglected people of Italy, foolishly clinging to a Church that ignores them. Over it they placed the minister, who

had happily been led from error. A good salary was attached to the post, and the man's wife and sister-in-law were with him to give him assistance. They were comfortably housed, well-fed and clothed, they were important personages in Presbyterian circles—all affording an object lesson to the poor people among whom they lived. And, moreover, everything was free, there were no collections in the church, no money for the music-lessons, night-school, or sewing-classes; instead there were gifts of money, clothes, books.

It happened, of course, that the agents of heresy encountered snags. They would enter a home where a mother struggled to maintain her large family on the small pay her husband received as a day laborer. "Come to our church," the minister would say. "We do not want money. When you go to your church, the cry is always money. If you want a child baptized, money; a marriage, money; read a Mass, more money. Money, money to make priests rich. Our ministers don't want money."

"Why, you foolish man," the poor woman would reply, "all the money in the world could not pay for a Mass or the Sacraments. We support our priests. Doesn't some one pay you to come around here to try to get me and my family to go to your church?"

"Oh, we must live," he would answer. "Well, why don't you let others live?" she would fling at him, as she held open the door. There were many who could thus look upon the bright prospect, and yet say, "Begone, Satan!"

The minister and his wife afterwards told the

Sisters many incidents which revealed the constancy of the people. Once the minister's wife entered the little shop of a poor Italian woman, from whom she had been in the habit of buying fruit. The good woman had just learned that her rich new friend was not a Catholic, as she had supposed. Hardly crediting the news, she asked the minister's wife if it were true that she was a Protestant. When she answered in the affirmative, she flung a hand before her eyes, crying, tragically, in Italian: "Oh, you poor unfortunate! And I loved you!" "Why," said the minister's wife, gently, "can you not love me now that you know I am a Protestant?" The Italian woman removed her hand from her eyes and asked: "You love the Blessed Virgin?" "Yes," said the minister's wife, "but not as you Catholics do." (And she, herself, the niece of an archbishop!) "We do not worship her, as you do. We worship God." The sad eyes of the poor shop-woman brightened, and extending her right hand, with the thumb about half an inch from the tip of the forefinger, said: "You love the Blessed Virgin a little bit, I love you a little bit!"

Another story they told was of a father who took his little son with him to the church. The child looked around, impressed by his new surroundings. Then he whispered something to his father who looked abashed and bade him be still. The minister, observing, asked: "What does the little fellow say?" "He wants to know where Jesus is," answered the father.

It was the illustrations of the faith and steadfastness of many of the people that sustained the

Sisters in this ordeal, it seemed as if they were never more helpless. The Presbyterian mission was well equipped, well supported and was determined in its drive for converts, for pupils for its Sunday school, and its various classes. It loudly announced that it had come to stay. The Sisters were redoubling their visits to the homes and were deeply affected by the change they found in some of them. A spirit of bitterness against the Church, priests and nuns, was displayed. "Why don't you do for us what the Protestants do?" they seemed to ask. Well the Sisters understood that they were unhappy in their defection, and sought to blame the Church for their state of mind. A typical case was that of a mother who, on being asked why she allowed her daughter to attend the Presbyterian church, replied: "I send her because the minister gives her music lessons free. He is going to graduate her in music. I have written to my friends in Italy and told them the minister is going to make a professor of music out of Rosie, and they are very much pleased. Next year I go to Italy and take Rosie with me. The Protestant religion won't hurt her. You see the Protestants are good to us. But if you will give her music lessons free, I will send her to you." If the Sisters could have offered what the proselytizers did there would have been no Italian situation.

The following paragraph from the records of the Institute, is eloquent of what the Sisters were accomplishing in their little house:

"Last evening tested our capacity for adaptation to the needs of the moment. In the parlor were five persons to see about matters connected with

the Mission work; in the hall, a young lady for instructions for her first confession and Holy Communion; in the dining room, a class of Italian youths, anxious to learn English, Miss Murphy their teacher; in the kitchen, a class of children coming for instructions for baptism. No wonder we are so anxious for a larger and more suitable place!"

The archbishop, while in full sympathy with the struggle of the Sisters, felt that in a matter so vitally concerning their own people, the Italians themselves should show more interest, but the Sisters understood the Italian mind and knew that it would be some years before it would be aroused to a sense of responsibility toward the less favored among their people, and the situation would then be past remedy. Their own superior and Council felt, rightly, as all must admit, that in the years that had elapsed since the Sisters had been missioned to the work the Society had done all that could reasonably be expected of it, and in the face of the necessary expansion of the Society's own more important institutions, hesitated to allow the Institute to assume a heavy debt, for which it must be liable in the case of failure.

Restrained by the prohibitions of superiors, harassed by the growing activities of the proselytizers, the Sisters had only God to turn to, and the merciful Father bowed an ear to their petitions. One memorable day they received a message from a priest, not very well known to them, asking them to come to see him. As his parish was in a locality where many poor families lived, the Sisters naturally supposed that he wished to

interest them in some needy case, and put a few extra dollars in their pocketbook in order to be able to give immediate relief, but when they met the priest, instead of appealing for help, he began to talk of their work. He had, he said, been watching it for several years, and what most impressed him in it, was their unfailing help to those known popularly as the "down-and-out." He had some money which he proposed, during his life, to loan to them at a very low rate of interest, and at his death, it would revert to them. "And I may not need the interest every year," he added. He left the room and returned with a check which he handed to the Sisters. It was for five thousand dollars! A silence more eloquent than words followed, and in it the good priest understood what the Sisters could not say. Only once did the priest retain the interest sent to him annually and some years afterward he renounced all claim to the money.

Never was answer to prayer more direct, more opportune. With this and the fund they had been raising for the new building, and the money they would receive from the sale of the house in Seventh Street, the Sisters were in a position to buy a suitable home, for they had relinquished the idea of building. Pulte College had been favorably considered, but their opinion was overruled. St. Joseph College, in charge of the Fathers of the Holy Cross, of Notre Dame, Indiana, was to be closed, and the property was offered for sale, and with its chapel, halls, and many class-rooms, it seemed admirably adapted to the needs of the Institute. But Seton Hospital had purchased the



Presbyterian, or Laura Memorial Hospital, in Sixth Street and the vacated building at 640 West Eighth Street was offered to the Institute. The activities of the Institute already required more space than the building offered, and the Sisters hesitated, in the hope that a more suitable home could be found.

Thus the matter hung fire, and the Sisters worked on. The Presbyterians had opened a second mission in connection with their church in Fourth Street, and the Methodists had made another beginning, but of all the efforts of the sects, that of the Presbyterians of the West End was the most strongly entrenched, the most persistent in its work, the most successful, for it was in the hands of one who did not spare himself, nor the money at his command to accomplish his ends. Finally, the Sisters called upon the pastor of the Presbyterian Church, who was the prime mover in setting up the Italian Presbyterian church, in order to protest against the proselytism being carried on under Presbyterian patronage. He did not deny that it was his hope to establish a congregation of Italian Presbyterians, although conceding that proselytism was wrong and was not approved by his Church. The interview was amicable, but accomplished nothing; both minister and Sisters parting with the mutual understanding that each would strive to counteract the efforts of the other—as has been done, to the devil's delight, since Luther "rent the seamless robe of Christ." In the very district in which the Presbyterians were casting their net for the poor Italians, were hundreds of unchurched foreigners

of northern Europe, native Americans, white and black all of Protestant ancestry, living in spiritual and physical conditions more deplorable than the Catholics, for the latter, at least, regarded the sanctity of the home, and being industrious and thrifty, were aiming to rise out of their poverty, and yet nothing was done for those who had a claim on Protestant interest, and who needed assistance most grievously.

Then the unexpected happened. Those who could have rendered help, relieved the situation, failing on action, God would show how needless to Him are human beings. Several Catholic boys who were attending the minister's school called at the Institute to get some Italian books, and the Sister who met them spoke earnestly of the designs against their faith, of the danger of heresy. "I wish I could see that minister!" she exclaimed indignantly, finding them obdurate. To her astonishment, the minister called on her the following day.

"I heard you wanted to see me, Sister," he said, courteously, as she entered the room. The Sister asked him why he was destroying the faith of his people. He tried to prove the good which he was doing, but his arguments fell flat before her replies. Finally he admitted that many accepted Protestantism for what they could get out of it. The interview was a long one. To the Sister it seemed as if the man were reluctant to be gone; his eyes were wistful as he glanced around the room with its evidence of the religion which he had foresworn. Although their parting was more friendly than their meeting had been, the Sister

attached no meaning to the visit, but a few weeks later, she was again called to the parlor to meet the minister. "Have you been praying for me?" he asked. "Every day," she answered. "Well, your prayers are heard. I felt that I must come back to the Church. Do not mention it to any one, please, but arrange an interview with the archbishop for me. I think my wife will join me. I was born a Catholic and so was my wife. I gave up my religion twelve years ago. I was convinced at that time that I was doing right. But of late, something tells me that I am not right."

"The grace of God is speaking to you," rejoined the Sister.

Facts were brought to light in the story of the poor man, over which the veil of silence must be drawn, and perhaps no work of the Santa Maria Institute shows more golden in the sight of Heaven than the bringing back to the fold of this strayed sheep. His wife and sister-in-law were also reconciled to the Church, and later, all returned to Italy.

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## Chapter XI—The Fight Against Commercialized Vice—A Pitiful Story—The Handwriting on the Wall

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**W**HILE the loss of the minister was severely felt by the Presbyterian Italian Mission, it did not accept defeat. Another Italian convert was brought from Detroit, but inasmuch as he had left the cobbler's bench to preach the newly accepted religion, he was ill-fitted to replace the cultured ex-minister. The Sisters realized, however, that the battle was still to be won, and yielding to circumstances, they decided to take the property in Eighth Street, which was offered to them for \$30,000. They sold the house in Seventh Street for \$7,700, which with the gift from the priest and the money received from other sources, permitted them to pay \$20,000 on the purchase price.

The Sisters took possession of their new home July 5, 1912, and began to put into execution some of the plans for their work. The first to engage them was a night school for boys and men, into which project the Jesuit Fathers of St. Xavier College entered heartily, promising to provide professors from among their graduates. The Rev. William Anthony, then secretary to the archbishop, was also interested in the work for the boys, and helped to furnish their club-room, but when the arrangements were completed, it was considered inadvisable to conduct such a school in the same building with the Sisters and the girl

inmates. The Sisters then made an effort to secure suitable quarters in the neighborhood, and finally two rooms were obtained in Holy Trinity school.

The Catholic women now rallied to the support of the Institute in increased numbers, and decided to form themselves into a society with the object of assisting the Sisters in their social work, and enlarging the activities of the Institute by increasing its funds, a project to which the archbishop gave his approval. "There is a great deal of social activity among our non-Catholic citizens," wrote His Grace to Mrs. Napoleon DuBrul, one of the promoters of the association, "and there ought to be, not only the same, but even a more energetic social activity among Catholics. It is a means of doing good and putting into practice the two great precepts of charity. Go on with the work, thereby promoting the glory of God through the material and spiritual good you do to your neighbor."

Classes in plain sewing and dressmaking were opened, under the direction of Mrs. Napoleon DuBrul, Mesdames Roche, Steffan, Quill, Dersay and Mrs. Johanna Kelly. Seventeen pupils were present at the first instructions, and the number increased so rapidly that the class had to be divided and more volunteer teachers were called for. Classes in cooking followed and became equally popular, for the desire to be a good housekeeper is innate in every normal girl and woman, and in their visits to the homes and in their work with the clubs, the Sisters had endeavored to strengthen this desire. For the accommodation of working girls, night classes in domestic science were also

opened, and a complete kitchen equipment was installed in the former lecture room of the hospital, which was devoted to this work. From Monday until Saturday the room was a scene of industry, and presently a marked difference was noticeable in the women and in their homes. These classes in sewing and domestic economy were missionary classes as well, since the spiritual is never neglected in Catholic social work. Of course all instructions were free, while in addition, material was supplied to those who could not provide it, the finished article becoming the property of the pupil. The work continued to draw zealous Catholic women who were anxious to be of service, and several of them took up their residence at the Institute, rendering invaluable assistance to the Sisters in the discharge of their manifold duties, both within and without the house.

On the acquisition of the larger building, the work of the Sisters in connection with the Juvenile Court had been expanded since it enabled them to take dependent children who otherwise would have been committed to penal institutions, but the capacity of the house was often tested. In their correctional work, the Sisters relied on the honor system, the Institute becoming in the widest sense of the word, the girls' home, in which they were governed entirely by the rules that exist in all well-regulated families. They attended school at Springer Institute, going and returning unattended. After school hours, they were kept busy with light duties, lessons in music, embroidery, mending, etc., with a proper amount of recreation.

There were of course watchful eyes upon them, but the surveillance was that of a prudent mother, and caused none of the antagonism which so often results from well meant, but untactful supervision. With the doors never locked, except at night, no girl was ever tempted to run away from the Institute and the infractions of rules were few and never serious. Love was the power that held them; for, young as they were, they understood that it was their own good which the Institute sought and when they left it was reluctantly.

On one occasion a father and mother brought their daughter to the Institute. They could only restrain her by locking her in the house, and when they beheld the unbolted doors of the Institute they remonstrated with the Sisters.

"You will have to lock our daughter up, she will run off," they said.

"Then, we cannot take your daughter," the Sisters replied. "We trust our girls."

With misgivings, they gave the girl to the Sisters, who wiser than her parents, put the girl upon her honor, and she became a model for the class.

Not all the girls were Juvenile Court cases, for frequently it was prevention, not cure, that the Sisters undertook. There were many other applicants who could not, of course, be received at the Institute, which was never a reformatory, but no woman, however abandoned, ever knocked in vain at the door of the Santa Maria. Times without number, when the applicant could not be accommodated, the Sisters would rent a room for her and maintain her until employment was found, or she would consent to go to the Sisters

of the Good Shepherd, who were ever a strong ally to the Institute.

From the beginning of their visits to penal institutions, the fate of the released prisoner, especially the female prisoner, appealed to the Sisters. It was impossible for the Institute, handicapped as it was in every way, to undertake the systematic care of all released prisoners, however deeply it deplored their situation. It could only offer aid to a few, and those such as appeared most urgent or were first offenders, but many a girl and woman, looking to the hour which would set her free with the cruel stigma of the prison upon her, knew that there stood open for her the friendly door of the Santa Maria Institute, where there would be no reproach, nor scorn nor shunning, but love and sympathy and rest—the rest for which her soul longed. After its days of restoration, there would be work, with regular pay, and always the Sisters to turn to, when she grew lonely or faint-hearted. The Sisters thus saved many women and ultimately saw them settled in homes of their own.

It is a decided loss to welfare work that the Institute should be restricted in this sorely needed department of life-saving, for on being liberated the offenders against the law find the agents of evil waiting to draw them back into the scenes out of which their criminal act took them—and how sad it is to know that in a Christian community the agent of good is not also there to lead them to the better way. It has always appeared to the writer that this work could be undertaken and developed by some woman's organization, work-



ing in co-operation with the Institute, for to accomplish any lasting good, the individual helper must deal with the individual victim; and this an association of Catholic women could surely do, as the members could secure the funds to pay the rental of a house, the salary of a matron, and the running expenses, the work being performed by the ex-prisoners in the interval of waiting for employment.

In ancient times, wealthy Catholics poured out their treasures for the ransom of captives, and noble lives were freely offered for the conduct of the cause. In every community there are slaves who too often, alas, belong to the household of the faith, who are as cruelly bound by evil, as completely in the power of Satan as those ancient victims were in the hands of cruel masters, and for whose rescue but little effort is made. It may seem that the evil is so widespread, so mighty, that individual action or attack upon one of its defences would be of little avail, but so at one time appeared the world of Paganism, to a little company of Eleven in the upper room of a certain house in Jerusalem, and yet it is but the religion of Christ that directs today the earth. So at one time also appeared the custom of slavery, yet legal ownership of human beings has practically disappeared. Satan's dominion over mankind must one day end, and that end is hastened by every attempt made against it. Every life redeemed from his slavery is the diminution of his power to the extent of the value of that life and its influence upon other lives.

In the assiduous visitation of the city and

branch hospitals, the Sisters also found men and women whose souls were as sorely in need of healing as were their bodies, and many availed themselves of the help which the Sisters could give. Catholics who had fallen from the faith or grown negligent in its practice were brought back to the Church, and here, as elsewhere, children were preserved. Nor was the charity of the Sisters spiritual only, but the dismissed patient, too weak to work, was often maintained by, or through the Institute, until health was fully restored, and many a sick mother whose heart was torn by anxiety for her children, was comforted by the knowledge that the Sisters would keep watch over them until her recovery.

The Sisters had as a companion in their work in the hospital, Mrs. Frank Fox, than whom none was more fitted for the delicate office. To her social training were added tact and a charming personality, which made the way easy for her entrance. Possessed of means which she dispensed with the charity of a Christian gentlewoman, Mrs. Fox never went empty-handed, in accompanying the Sisters, and her gifts were so plainly the offering of a loving heart that their acceptance was made the easier. Flowers, fruit, magazines, abounded in her wake, and often where the black-robed Sister would not have been desired at a bedside, the elegantly gowned society woman was welcomed, and in time she usually was able to make a place beside it for the Sister likewise.

The Sisters centered an amount of attention upon what was known as Ward O, in the old City

Hospital. In this, the girls and women of the underworld were sequestered, while undergoing the treatment required by the law to refit them for their occupation; which occupation, besides damning their own and other souls, sows the red tares of disease among the generations to be, sows them—Oh, shameful, staggering fact! with the aid of science and the consent of law! Here, Mrs. Fox rendered great aid to the Sisters in their rescue work, for where the wretched women would have spurned the Sister, representing as she did the opposite extreme of their lost lives, the woman of the world was not repulsed. She gave out something of her spiritual force to them, before she passed on, causing them to see that the black-garbed nun who followed was also a woman, with the difference that she had centered her heart upon the Divine Heart, her love upon the Divine Love, and had come to them as the messenger of the Love which embraces the sinning woman not less than the sinless one, and of which all other loves are but the semblance. When their confidence was gained and their pitiful confession made, they met a human sympathy such as a mother would give, and saw a hand offered to lead them from their hideous world to a place of refreshment and peace. Some yielded to the influence and passed out of Ward O to gain rehabilitation by striving valiantly in the world, or entering the Society of Magdalens. And who shall determine the influence of the Sisters upon those who went out by the door by which they had come in! In what hour may it not have been a hand set between them and the commission of

unpardonable crime! In what final moment may it not have appeared as a Heart pierced for them, and won their salvation! The spring, scooped out by a hand, may become a lake further down the valley—and the good act done, the good word spoken, may years hence, bring about a soul's salvation. In five years, the Sisters restored one hundred and fifty-seven women to normal living.

In these recent years we have heard a great deal about the bestial traffic in woman, a traffic which has been rightly named White Slavery. On the printed page, the screen of the moving picture, and the stage, this evil has been graphically presented to the public, societies have been started to grapple with it, it has been denounced in the pulpit, and the upheaval of public sentiment has resolved itself into laws for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of their betrayers. There should be no cessation of this warfare until every agent of commercialized vice is behind prison bars, every keeper of resorts likewise punished, and their victims placed where they can do no further harm to the human race.

There is not in Cincinnati any organization that has expended stronger efforts for the overthrow of commercialized vice than the Santa Maria Institute, nor has any human or personal consideration ever prevented the Sisters from joining in the outcry against it. Even before the crusade against the traffic in girls had become nation-wide the Sisters were driven to start it in Cincinnati, and had they not been halted, the Queen City and not Chicago would have had the credit of inaugurating this most beneficial work.

One day as Sister Blandina and Mrs. Fox were leaving Ward O of the City Hospital, a girl, about sixteen years of age, said to the Sister:

"You come here trying to help these girls and women, when they are past help. Why don't you instead give your time and effort toward keeping them from getting into the resorts? Why don't you put the agents of the resorts out of commission? What is the use of coming here, telling us to reform? If we leave this life, our places will immediately be filled by young, innocent girls, such as we once were. And what can we do? Where can we go? Why don't you work for the prevention of the evil, when you know its cure is impossible?"

"Will you explain yourself more fully, my dear child?" said the Sister. "I am sure you have a viewpoint that would help us, for I agree with you that prevention is the best remedy."

They sat down on a bench in the corridor, and the unfortunate girl then began her story, which became a familiar one for the public during the sittings of the Illinois Vice Commission.

"I was born and until a year ago lived in (naming a small country town in Ohio). I wanted to get work to help my parents, but there was nothing to do in such a small place, especially light work, which is the only kind I could have done, as I was never very strong. One day I saw an advertisement in a Cincinnati daily paper offering a good place to a girl who was willing to do the lighter part of the housework. I wrote applying for the place, and in reply a man came to our town, and with my mother's consent, engaged me.

He said I would be more of a companion to the lady than a maid, although I would be expected to dust the furniture and perform other light duties. I was the happiest girl in the world, I think, for of course, like other country girls, I wanted to live in the city. I was certain I would get along and be able to send plenty of money home to my parents. I won't ever forget how we planned that future, my mother and I, and how she held me to her breast and kissed me over and over again, as I was leaving, and begged God to bless and protect me and keep me as I was, her good little girl! You wonder why I don't believe in God? How can I? If there were a God, don't you think He would have listened to my mother's prayer, and saved me? I went away with the man. He took me to a house in Cincinnati, which looked wonderful to me, from the outside. When I was on the inside I knew I was in hell. There is no escape from hell—that's part of your Christian belief!

"I was ruined. If I could have gotten out—and I couldn't—where could I go? I was a stranger, I had no money. To whom could I go? And if I could have gotten out and gone to any one, would that one have listened to my story or believed me? I could not go home even if I could have gotten out and had the carfare. Oh! I'd rather die ten thousand deaths, than go home to my mother, my friends, the thing they made me! And they know that! Oh, they are wise and cunning, those mistresses and their agents! They know girls better than girls know themselves. And so they know that if they were to leave every door unlocked, I would not go away, none of us would.

“And so you see me! My soul is lost, my body is diseased, I am their slave! They will use me until even your big doctors here can do no more for me, and then they will turn me out. They did not find me a very good investment, for you see I ought not to be in the hospital after only one year. They blame me. I am not careful, they say. Nor am I. I want to die! Oh, if there be a God, why won’t He let me die? And I am not the only girl brought to this hell by such deception. And so I say, why don’t you work to prevent us from being brought to this hell? What is the use of coming when we are damned—damned in soul and body—damned for time and eternity!”

The girl was not crying, nor was her voice raised, but her words went over the Sister like a stream of burning lava. She had heard of such things, and perhaps such a complete deception had appeared to her improbable, but now the record of a lost soul was laid before her and she saw that the thing was done openly, was indeed a well-organized business. She secured the name of the mistress of the establishment, exacted from the girl a promise to stand by her story, and then Sister Blandina went to Archbishop Elder. The archbishop was horrified by the revelation of the vice conditions of the city, and knowing that the law was against the woman and that Sister Blandina was willing to aid in its enforcement, he bade her to go ahead.

In company with Mrs. Fox, Sister Blandina sought the house, taking the precaution, however, of requesting of the Chief of Police the services of a private detective, who was ordered to remain

outside in case he were wanted. After a brief delay the woman answered the astonishing demand of a Sister of Charity for an interview. Needless to say that no time was lost by Sister Blandina in preliminaries. She ordered the woman to close her place within a week, or she would put her behind the bars of the penitentiary. The woman showed fight, but the order was only repeated, reinforced by the information that a witness was ready to appear against her.

And then another came into the scene, a scene as novel and dramatic as was ever enacted, for when before had a Sister of Charity stood thus in the devil's inner citadel, threatening in the name of Christian morality, his scarlet emissary? Into the scene came another woman, and the heart of the accusing nun was stabbed by pity. Behind the angry mistress, clad in her loose crimson gown, appeared a modestly attired elderly woman, her mild face framed by silvery hair—the mother of this monster who battered on human souls and bodies, with the mother-love pleading for her from dim, anguished eyes. But the nun saw the child on the bench in the corridor of the City Hospital, and she repeated her challenge.

"I tell you, those girls come here of their own free will!" replied the mistress.

"The court will decide that," said the Sister, "unless you close this house in a week."

Then, as she was advised by the archbishop, Sister Blandina went to consult Mr. Ledyard Lincoln, a prominent Catholic attorney.

"Sister," he said, "you have started one of the best things ever done in Cincinnati. We know



there are conditions in this city that cry to heaven for vengeance, and we have now what we needed—a well authenticated case. Bring it to trial and I will see that it gets before men like myself for its verdict, and a stop will be put to this devilish traffic in girls.”

The mistress of the house also sought legal aid, and to their everlasting shame, a firm of Catholic lawyers gave it! Their first step was to call in the aid of an all too willing press—and the next day’s paper gave the story of the mistress of a resort being approached by a woman disguised as a Sister of Charity and demanding money from her on threat of exposure, the screed being accompanied by the sketch of the bogus nun, and scare headlines. But the story was only intended to throw the public off the scent. Commercialized vice and its agents, the political boss and his subordinates, the liquor interests and property owners, the mistresses and patrons, and all the intermediary carrion crows that live on outraged womanhood, felt terror striking at their hearts. There had been rumblings of the storm of public indignation against the misrule which for years had existed in the city, and for such a flagrant case of crime to come to light, and flung into that light by the ever conservative Catholic Church, would cause the storm to break in its full force and the deluge would follow.

The two lines were uncoiling and a fight which would unquestionably have attracted national attention and which just as unquestionably would have been fought to a finish and given the victory to morality, such a fight was on. But a few days

after the publication of the false newspaper story, the Superior of the Society came to the Institute, and inquired of Sister Blandina if she were the Sister who had called upon the woman. When Sister Blandina admitted the fact, the Superior timorous of unpleasant publicity requested that nothing further should be done in the matter by the Sister. Her position was painful, for she had acted on the advice of her archbishop and ecclesiastical superior; she had pledged her word to close the house, and had called to her assistance several prominent Catholic gentlemen; while the hands of thousands of women seemed lifted, pleading with her to go on with her work. But her Superior had spoken.

"Very well, Mother!" she said, and the great work ended, as far as the Sister was concerned. But the veil of silence which had shrouded this monstrous evil had been rent, and the whisperings that followed were prophetic. A woman's club of the city invited Sister Blandina to speak before it on the evil she had exposed, and while she could not comply, she was comforted by the knowledge that others had been roused. It was the stone thrown into the pool of water, and the ever widening circle extended to the shore. Eventually Cincinnati rose in her might, and the boss who had made her name a byword and a hissing was overthrown, and under Mayor Henry T. Hunt, the Queen City of the West experienced regeneration.

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## Chapter XII—The Institute Becomes the Center of Catholic Social Activities—The Federated Women's Societies—War Work

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**A**LTHOUGH failure in one attack against vice was decreed for them, the Sisters did not lay down their arms, for they could not do so in conscience. An opportunity for a second public attack on White Slavery came a few years later, when the Bill regulating maternity hospitals and "baby farms" in Ohio, was under consideration. Invited to speak before the Hamilton County legislative delegation on the Bill, Sister Blandina said that while she favored its passage she found that it did not go far enough, but should include measures for the protection of the innocent and against the methods used to procure girls for the resorts.

Citing her own experience as a social worker, she told of the conditions existing in the city, how agents for the resorts lie in wait for girls to trap them with false promises of good positions, of cabmen at railway stations persuading girls to enter their vehicles, only to drive them to some unspeakable den, of procuresses going among shop girls and luring them to their ruin. She urged that railway stations should be carefully watched by the authorities to prevent girls from falling a prey to agents of improper houses, that some system be adopted by which cabmen should be held strictly amenable to the law, and protested against an age-limit for girls. "The procuring of

ignorant and innocent girls of any age," she declared, "should be made the severest of crimes, punished by the severest of penalties."

She has lived to see many of her ideas carried out and to have shared in the work. The stand thus taken by the Sisters against commercialized vice, their constant appeal to their co-religionists to lend assistance in a so vital matter, finally resulted in a federation of the Cincinnati societies of Catholic women, with the blessing and approval of Archbishop Moeller. It was formed first of the fraternal societies of Catholic women operating in Cincinnati, and included the Catholic Ladies of Columbia, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of St. John, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Catholic Women Foresters, the Catholic Ladies Benevolent Association and the Catholic Ladies of America. To these were later to be joined the Married Ladies and Young Ladies sodalities of the various parishes, and any other Catholic women's society interested in the work. Besides the membership of societies there was a social membership for men and women who wished to promote Catholic activities along the more advanced lines of the day.

In his letter to the pastors, commending the Federation of Catholic Women Societies and the establishment of Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, the archbishop pointed out that by the co-operation of the two societies in the parish, all cases of poverty and destitution would be taken care of, wayward and neglected children looked after, and the two associations would be ready aids to the pastor for the betterment of his people.

In several of the parishes the Federation began its work in conjunction with the Vincentians. Cases coming to the Santa Maria or the Associated Charities, were referred back to the parish to which the person or families belonged, and through the two organizations received immediate attention. The Federation had its headquarters at the Santa Maria Institute, the Sisters being members of its executive committee. Working with them and partaking of their wide experience, the Federation was spared many of the failures and mistakes attending new ventures. The archbishop had especially commended to it work for the deaf-mutes, and the committee appointed from the Federation rendered every assistance to the Rev. H. J. Waldhaus, who had been placed in charge of these people. Another committee supplied Catholic reading matter for rest-rooms of department stores and interested itself in the purchase of Catholic books and periodicals for the public and circulating libraries, while other committees worked with the Sisters in their various departments. The Federation supplied text-books for poor Catholic children, and its members met regularly at the Institute to sew for the needy, the material being supplied by the Society.

To unite the Catholic women of Cincinnati against the social evil, in all its forms, had been the animating idea of the founders of the Federation, it being their intention, when their revenue would permit, to engage an experienced field-agent to carry on their protective work. Meanwhile volunteers were called for and the response was ready. Several members daily met the in-



KINDERGARTEN, SANTA BAMBINO DAY NURSERY



coming trains at the principal railway stations, the strange girl or woman was directed safely to her destination, if she had none, she was taken to the Santa Maria Institute, or, if she was a non-Catholic she was turned over to the Young Women's Christian Association for protection. Becoming interested in the work and aware now of the danger ever lurking on the path of the unwary, they were constantly on the outlook, and accomplished a world of good.

The archbishop later named the Santa Maria the center of Catholic charities and social activities in Cincinnati. The Federation and Superior Conference of St. Vincent de Paul agreed to meet there, in order to work in conjunction with the Institute and each other, but the war changed the whole aspect of endeavor, many activities being taken over by the Government, the Red Cross, and other agencies. The need to form Catholic women into an all-embracing organization absorbed the interest of the Federation, while that of the Vincentians was absorbed by the organization of the Catholic charities of the archdiocese into one body, with a central government of which the Rev. Francis Gusch is the head, ably assisted by the Rev. Marcellus Wagner, absorbed the Vincentians. The continuance of the Travelers Aid at the railway stations inaugurated during the war, Catholic women being among the employes, assures the safeguarding of strange girls and women, and affords facilities for Santa Maria Institute and the Bureau of Catholic Charities to get immediately into touch with Catholic immigrants.

But the Federation of Catholic Women Soci-



eties of Cincinnati may claim one lasting monument to its brief existence, namely, the establishment of the first Catholic Day Nursery in the city. Though the actual work of starting the nursery was undertaken and carried to glorious success by the Children of Mary of the Sacred Heart Academy, Clifton, it owes its origin to the Federation and the zealous assistance of the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute. The Sisters were painfully aware of the need of a day nursery among the Hungarians in the vicinity of St. John and St. Augustine churches, where they had begun missionary work. In seeking to federate the Children of Mary the Federation had brought the necessity of its work before the superior of the Sacred Heart Academy, Mother Mary Nolan, a true daughter of the apostolic Mother Duchesne, founder of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in America. While its constitution would not permit the affiliation of the Children of Mary as a body with the Federation, Mother Nolan was anxious that it should engage in some of the works to which the Federation was pledged, and when the need of the day nursery was made known to her its future was assured, for with true Catholic zeal the Children of Mary responded to the counsel of Mother Nolan, and the Christ Child Nursery was duly opened. There is not in the city a better equipped, better conducted nursery, and the good it has accomplished is beyond measure. Each Child of Mary regards it as her own and such concentration of personal interest cannot fail of success.

During these years the Sisters' attention had

not been given to the Italians in Cincinnati alone, but in other cities of the archdiocese, notably Dayton, where there were colonies of their people, they paid visits at regular intervals, and by their advice and admonitions strengthened the faith in the practical Catholics and reclaimed others who had grown remiss in their religious duties.

As the fame of their work grew, calls to the Sisters to start missions came from distant places, the first to apply being the pastor of an Italian congregation in Detroit, Michigan, where there are large groups of these people and where the proselytizers were unusually busy. This appeal was followed by one from Long Island City, New York, where an Italian pastor, having heard of the success of the Institute, was anxious to secure a colony of Sisters. New Orleans later called for workers, and from Naples, Italy, the Sisters received the offer of a castle as a foundation for their work in the motherland. The offer was made by Jesuit Fathers, who pointed out it could become a novitiate to train Italian Sisters for the work at home and abroad. But the Santa Maria is itself only a mission, depending on the mother-house for its own Sisters; and while the Superior and her Council recognized that great good could be done if the invitations were accepted, it was not possible because of the needs of their existing institutions, for it has frequently happened that, owing to illness and shortage in the Society, the community of the Institute has been reduced to its original number.

When the disastrous flood of 1913 suddenly called upon Cincinnati for aid the disorganized

condition of its charities was apparent. All rushed to help, with consequent overlapping in some instances and neglect in others. Out of the experience grew the idea of coordination of the many existing social service agencies. A great task of reconstruction followed the flood, and as no single organization seemed able to cope with it, the creation of an association of all organizations to carry on the work, was determined upon, and thus the Council of Social Agencies came into existence, with the development of support from a common fund, raised by popular subscription. No society or institution joining the Social Agencies would be allowed to call on the public for help. The Santa Maria Institute was the first Catholic society to affiliate with the Social Agencies, the Bureau of Catholic Charities following, and in the succeeding years since then (1916), practically all the Catholic charitable societies and institutions of the city have done likewise, a plan which has worked admirably. Those in charge of the works of mercy and benevolence are relieved of the anxiety of securing support, and are free to give all their time and attention to their duties while the public contributes once annually and is not troubled further for alms.

The first year the Santa Maria Institute was allowed \$12,000. The Sisters were denied a salary, since they had not previously received one, but the assurance of an income large enough to enable them to engage capable assistance was such a relief from the heavy burden which they had carried so long, that they were willing to yield the point, and the mother-house has con-

tinued to supply the Mission gratuitously. Some works which had been long postponed were undertaken, chief among which was the opening of a kindergarten and a day nursery, but to do this, the Sisters were again confronted by the problem of buying or building a house. They had received a good offer for the property in Eighth Street, in its exchange for the Sterling Hotel, at Seventh and Mound Streets. This building contained about one hundred rooms, affording an opportunity for carrying out one of the ideas of the Sisters, apartments for light housekeeping for business women and girls, besides giving ample space for all their activities under one roof. The exchange, however, was not deemed advisable and the Sisters purchased the house east of the Institute, where they opened the Santo Bambino Day Nursery. It was blessed May 21, 1918, by the Most Rev. Archbishop Moeller. A trained nurse, with two assistants, was placed in charge, the nursery kitchen was equipped by the Federation of Catholic Women Societies, and other friends supplied many articles of furniture. The nursery was needed in the neighborhood, where so many mothers are under the necessity of earning the living for the family or assisting in its support.

The kindergarten had been opened the year previous in a rented building opposite the Institute, which served also for the boys' clubs and night classes, an arrangement which did not prove satisfactory, for there was always danger to the children in crossing the street, while its distance from the Institute left it unprotected at night, causing it on several occasions to be entered, and

its furnishings stolen or maliciously destroyed. The Sisters were finally compelled to close the kindergarten because of its situation, and when their necessity was made known to Mrs. James Heekin and her daughter, Mrs. Robert Le Blond, they offered to purchase the house at 634 West Eighth Street and donate it to the Santa Maria Institute. This handsome gift to the work was made in September, 1919, and the kindergarten was re-opened in its own home a few weeks later. There stood between it and the nursery a house of ten rooms, and when it was offered for sale the Sisters opened negotiations for its purchase. These were finally concluded and the Sisters took over the property. It is used as a home for their own social workers and students, beside permitting the Sisters to offer temporary accommodations to other women who are strangers in the city or without a home. Thus the completion of their quarter of a century finds the Sisters, who began homeless and penniless, with four good pieces of property which for the present afford ample accommodations for their works.

Here let us pause to pay tribute to the people of Cincinnati and adjacent towns, for their kindness to the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute. When they entered the city, the Sisters were practically unknown, for their religious life had been spent in distant places. They had to make friends for themselves as well as undertake an entirely new work, and they have succeeded in the latter because of their success in the former. From all circles their friends have come. Many could help them by gifts of money, by the influence of their

position; others could only offer their time and their services, while not a few could give only their prayers and good will, but whatever they had to bestow was bestowed freely, which enhances the value of every gift. The pages of the records from which we have drawn largely for this story of the Santa Maria Institute glow with stories of kindness to the Sisters and their work. Now it is the small offering of the poor, again the large donation of the wealthy, and whether small or great, the same gratitude wells forth for help that was always timely.

Its association with non-Catholic and non-sectarian societies and institutions has always been harmonious. Among instances that may be set down are the pleasant relations that exist between the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute and the Episcopalian Sisters of the Transfiguration, who conduct the Girls' Home in Glendale. Should a Catholic child come into the hands of the Sisters of the Transfiguration, they strictly adhere to their promise to notify the Sisters; and unless forbidden by the parents, as has unhappily sometimes been the case, the girl is turned over to the Institute. Similar friendly sentiments mark the interworking with the Children's Home, while at the public institutions the Sisters have open sesame. The officials know them for what they are, true ministers to suffering or sinful humanity, and the result of that ministry means an improvement in their wards.

While the war was in progress the Institute redoubled its works of mercy, for with the public mind absorbed in matters of wider appeal—local

needs were too often neglected. The Institute took patriotic part in the war activities, a knitting class being formed among the girls, and a number of useful articles were contributed to the Red Cross.

In August of 1916, Sister Justina and Sister Blandina celebrated the golden jubilee of their entrance into the religious life, and they were then made to realize that their work for their people was appreciated by them. A high Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated in the Sacro Cuore Church on September 10, for the intention of the beloved jubilarians and was attended by the Italians in large numbers. At its conclusion the Sisters received the congratulations of the people, and in the afternoon an entertainment was given for them, when they were presented with a purse of \$125, which, coming as it did from a poor people, was a generous offering. After the record of that event we find this note in the annals of the Institute: "We shall use that money to provide school books for poor children."



OPEN AIR DINNER AT DAY NURSERY





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## Chapter XIII—The Institute Establishes Its First Branch Center—The Knights of Columbus Give Aid—Miss Carter's Work

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**D**URING all these years the Italian colony in the Florence Avenue neighborhood had been an object of solicitude for the Sisters, as well as a problem for the pastor of the Church of the Assumption, Rev. William Conway, within whose parish it lay. The zealous priest took advantage of every opportunity to assist the Sisters in their work among his Italian parishioners. Understanding the difficulty which nationality and language present, he would have welcomed an Italian assistant, and repeatedly made the offer of the hospitality of his home and a daily Mass stipend if a missionary for the people could be secured, but since such a missionary was not available he labored with the Sisters and received Italian children into his school.

Every Sunday, the Sisters visited the neighborhood to gather the children for Sunday school and Mass at the Church of the Assumption. Their constructive work among the families was bearing fruit, as well as was their work for the spiritual well-being of the colony. A competent housekeeper was engaged to follow in their wake in order to assist the women to carry out the practical instructions previously given. Still the Sisters felt the necessity of a Center at Walnut Hills, where the need was most urgent. A census had been taken by the field-agent, and at this juncture

a member of a well-known benevolent Catholic family called at the Institute. "Are you aware, Sister," he asked, "that the proselytizers are going to leave Barr and Mound Streets because their work there has been a failure, and take up their abode in the Walnut Hills Italian colony?" "Thank you for the information," said the Sister.

The time of day was 11:30 A. M. At 1 P. M. one of the Sisters, accompanied by three of the Institute's social workers, Mrs. Berry and the Misses Carter and Marzluff, were driven to the colony, by the Rev. J. B. Chietti, assistant pastor of Sacro Cuore Church, made a circuit of the colony, rented a place, induced a gentleman to give fifty dollars a month toward the expenses, and thus in a few hours' time the constructive work was localized. The Italians literally flocked to the new Center at Symmes and Burbank Streets, of which Miss Marie Carter became manager and general secretary. The Center was formally opened May 15, 1919. Its instant popularity was proof of its need and also of the effectiveness of the work of the Sisters. The people had been educated up to the idea and the hardest part of the pioneer's labors was thus obviated. The announcement of a sewing-class for the women brought a crowd that was difficult to accommodate, while the young people were equally responsive to the efforts made for them.

This condition quickened Miss Carter's enthusiasm, and she visioned the possibilities of the work. With the happy faculty of making friends, she soon gathered about her a company animated by her own spirit of helpfulness. Among her new

friends, was Dr. Mary E. Tracy, of the Cincinnati Health Department, through whom a milk station and clinic were opened at the Center by the Board of Health, where mothers received the best milk for their infants, and medical treatment for their children, which proved a decided adjunct to the Center.

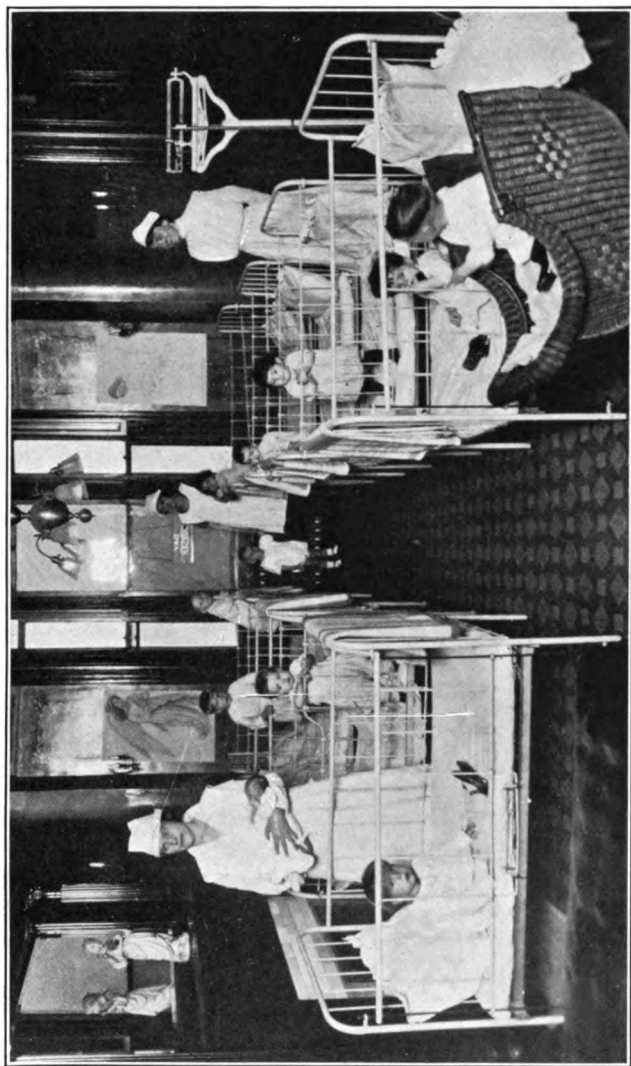
The Italians are an affectionate and a grateful people. One has but to reach their hearts, and the difficulty of dealing with them is largely overcome. Miss Carter soon accomplished this, the people's confidence in her being one of the most hopeful aspects of her work among them. The strict surveillance, which Italians maintain over their daughters, constituted the Center's chief difficulty of its attempt to reach the girls, who were free to attend the daylight activities but who were not permitted to leave the home after nightfall unless accompanied by a parent or a brother. To break through that custom as far as the Center was concerned, convince the parents of the need of innocent amusements for the girls, and that their daughters were as safe at the Center as at home, was one of Miss Carter's achievements and her neighborhood dances and parties, her girls' clubs, have been unusually successful. The Center, of course, is not confined to Italians, for like the Santa Maria Institute it has never been sectional. All in the neighborhood are made welcome and it has ever been a center of Americanization.

Such advance did it make that within a year it was able to take its place as an independent organization, and as such receive its own budget from the Social Agencies.

The house at Symmes and Burbank Streets was soon overcrowded, and new quarters had to be secured, so the property at Kenton Street was rented and the removal made. For various reasons it was deemed advisable to change the name from the Santa Maria Center to the Kenton Street Welfare Center. It maintains its close connection with the Institute, and Miss Carter and her associates look to the Sisters for the help and guidance which, from long experience and high consecration they are best fitted to give.

With the larger quarters the work of the Center grew. The kindergarten has a large, airy and pleasant room, which is in charge of Miss Mary Bunker, a sister of the distinguished poet, John Bunker of New York. It is attended by an average of one hundred pupils daily. Of American birth, but various ancestry, the little ones are there brought together, and the moulding and welding of the citizenship of the future is begun in the atmosphere of religion.

The boys of Kenton Street neighborhood may not have been worse than other city boys but assuredly they were not better. The gang spirit was prevalent and promised to give Miss Carter the supreme test of her ability as a social worker, but the boy scout movement had received the approval of Archbishop Moeller, and she knew that it offered a solution for her boy problem. At her request, a number of prominent Catholic men, among them Messrs. Ernest DuBruhl, Joseph Verkamp and E. F. DuBruhl, became interested in the undertaking, and the Kenton Street Boy Scout Troop was organized, Father Conway and his



INFANTS' DORMITORY, DAY NURSERY



curate taking keen interest in its formation. It was placed under the direction of Mr. DuBruhl, Jr., and the transformation of the boys began with the donning of the uniform. It gave them a new outlook, and the training in manliness which they receive, the constant example they have in their scout-master of loyalty to Church and country, are accomplishing marvels in the lads, who were growing up in neglect and facing a future full of peril to themselves and to society, which heartlessly produces their type. On certain nights the boys meet at the Center, where they have their billiard table, cards and other forms of amusement. Here under the eyes of a trained worker, the formation of character goes on, in the inculcation of fair play, courtesy and gentlemanly behavior.

After the Archbishop gave his approval to the Girl Scouts movement, Miss Carter organized a troop among her girls, it being one of the first Catholic girl scout troops in Cincinnati. As with the boys, the several nationalities of the neighborhood are represented in its ranks, and the necessary work of amalgamation is carried on. Made up as the neighborhood is of Americans of Irish and German descent and a preponderance of Italians the Kenton Street Center's boy and girl scouts present an interesting aspect. If out of the fusion of the three races, the best of each predominates, then Kenton Street neighborhood should make a notable contribution to the moral and intellectual life of the city.

But the Center is not concerned entirely with the rising generation; its helpfulness embraces all.



The mothers have their club, and in its weekly meetings neighbors who hitherto stood apart because of racial differences are brought together and realize that humanity is the same, despite language and customs, and that motherhood is the great leveler of these. One learns from the other, and all from the expert teachers who instruct in sewing, the care of the house and the family. The men also have their evenings for recreation or study. There are classes in English for the newly arrived immigrant, in Americanization for those who are seeking to become citizens. Owing to lack of room night school has not yet been started but the man or youth who is anxious to acquire an education or take up a special branch of study, is cared for. In this department of the Center's work, and its care of the boys, the Jesuit Fathers of St. Xavier College, personally or through their students, have rendered invaluable assistance.

The Knights of Columbus are one of the Center's chief benefactors. Fully alive to the worth of the work which Miss Carter is doing for the preservation of faith in the neighborhood and the Americanization of the foreign element, these patriotic Catholic men give her splendid assistance. Their notable generosity enabled her to equip the back yard of the settlement-house with playground apparatus, as they provided funds for necessary improvements on the property. Nor has their interest been shown only in giving financial aid, but members have actively engaged in the welfare work, and much of its success is due to their ready response to Miss Carter's appeal.

Thus have the lay activity and interest, visioned

by the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute, come into actuality, not only at Kenton Street Center but at the Institute likewise. Who shall deny that this has been largely brought about by fraternal organizations of men and women? And it is a matter of regret that Catholic women have no such national fraternal society as the men have in the Knights of Columbus. Until such is formed, the influence of Catholic women—and what influence should be so powerful!—will lack in concentration. Fraternalism is the well which supplies the great stream of beneficence, which we find the Knights of Columbus directing to so many channels at home and abroad. That the organization is so great and many channelled is because it first made itself strong as a society, drilled until it found a vein, fed from an inexhaustible source, hence sufficient first for the needs of the society and then for the needs of others.

In this story of the Santa Maria Institute the names of Italian families of Cincinnati are repeatedly found on its pages. Possessing wealth and education, and being fervent Catholics, they have been sensitive to the situation of the less favored of their race, and their money and the services were given for the prosecution of the works intended to advance the Italian people, spiritually and materially. To this the first offshoot of the Institute, the Kenton Street Welfare Center, these noble Italians were even more generous, for time had shown how well and wisely the Sisters had builded, and they knew the Kenton Street house would repeat the successes of its mother.

Among these staunch friends, are Mr. Charles Ginnochio, Italian Consul in Cincinnati, and his amiable wife, who, it may truly be said, is never more happy than when rendering some service to her compatriots; Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Castellini, Mr. and Mrs. John Muzzio, Mrs. Mary Rampoldi, Mrs. Mary Jones, Mrs. Aurelia Overend, Miss Virginia Cassion, Mrs. Raphael Pedretti.

The Center has received equal devotion from its American friends, among whom may be mentioned Mrs. Agatha Washington, the Misses Mary and Anna Springmeyer. A band of volunteer girls and women have enabled Miss Carter to organize and carry on the many activities that distinguish the Center. Misses Madge, Jean and Ruth Murray, Nora Gilday, Corrinne Geering, Estelle Keeveny, Edith Gillenback, with the Sisters and Miss Carter, taught the Sunday School classes. When the requirements of the Institute made heavier demands on the Sisters the Ursuline Nuns of St. Ursula Academy, Reading Road, took their places and regularly assisted in giving religious instructions at the Center on Sunday afternoon. The Children of Mary of the Sacred Heart College and Academy, Clifton, are also associated with the work of the Center, and have charge of a class of fine needlework for girls. Another staunch friend of Miss Curtis' work is Sister Mary Carmel, of the Ursuline Convent, McMillin Street. Classes in physical culture, lessons in music and English are also part of the work of the Center among girls, the teachers being volunteer. Hikes, picnics, visits to places of interest, bring pleasure into the lives of the young people during the sum-

mer, besides keeping them in good environment, while parties, dances, literary and musical entertainments hold them together during the winter months. Thus, at all seasons, the pleasure which is natural to youth and of which the denial must result fatally, is provided, without the danger which attends it when it is not supervised.

In August, 1921, a public playground was opened in the neighborhood, through the efforts of Miss Carter. Its formal dedication took place August 24, and was an important civic affair. One of the speakers of the evening was the Rev. William Conway, pastor of the Church of the Assumption. It did not require his words to express his joy over the work being done in the neighborhood, especially for the Italians; it beamed from his face. His pastoral solicitude had long been troubled by the situation, and we have seen how, through the Sisters, he had striven to improve it. The establishment of the Kenton Street Center, the future which lies promisingly before it, the changes which will come with its development, give him every assurance that the Italians in his parish will be safeguarded against the enemies of their Faith.

As the Institute was handicapped for years by the want of a suitable home, so the same cause is retarding the Kenton Street Center. But its value to the community has been so conclusively shown, its work among the Italians so keenly appreciated that it is not likely that it will be called upon to suffer a probationary period as long as that endured by the Institute. It is quite within the limits of the probable that the celebration of

the silver jubilee of the Santa Maria Institute may find its eldest daughter in her own home. Certainly such an event lies in the near future, as a site has already been selected.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1920, the Most Rev. Archbishop Moeller visited and blessed the Center. The house was overcrowded, and His Grace was both pleased and surprised at the work carried on at the Center and the response made by the people. In his address the archbishop said that when a bishop visits the Pope His Holiness generally asks if there are any Italians in his diocese and what is being done for them. Sometimes the bishop is at a loss what to answer, but such, the archbishop said, would not be his case and when he paid his next visit to Rome, he would be able to carry a good report to the Holy Father of the great progress of Italian work in his diocese. The archbishop said he saw the need of a chapel for the Italian colony of Walnut Hills, and promised to give it to the people as soon as the expected assistant to the Rev. J. B. Chiotti, pastor of the Sacro Cuore Church, should arrive. The music on the occasion was furnished by the Knights of St. John Band of Covington, Kentucky. The bandmaster, Eugene Giangola, was a former pupil of the Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute when they taught their school in Holy Trinity, and nearly all the members of the band had been prepared by the Sisters for their First Communion, a holy consolation which the Sisters frequently meet, in these later days of fruition.

As circumstances prevented the arrival of the expected assistant pastor, Father Chiotti, yielding

to the pleadings of the residents of the neighborhood, began the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays at the Center on August 28, 1921. The services are held in the general hall, which is inadequate to accommodate the congregation. Friends supplied the altar and all things necessary for the celebration of Mass. A beautiful gold chalice was the gift of Miss Margaret Ryan.

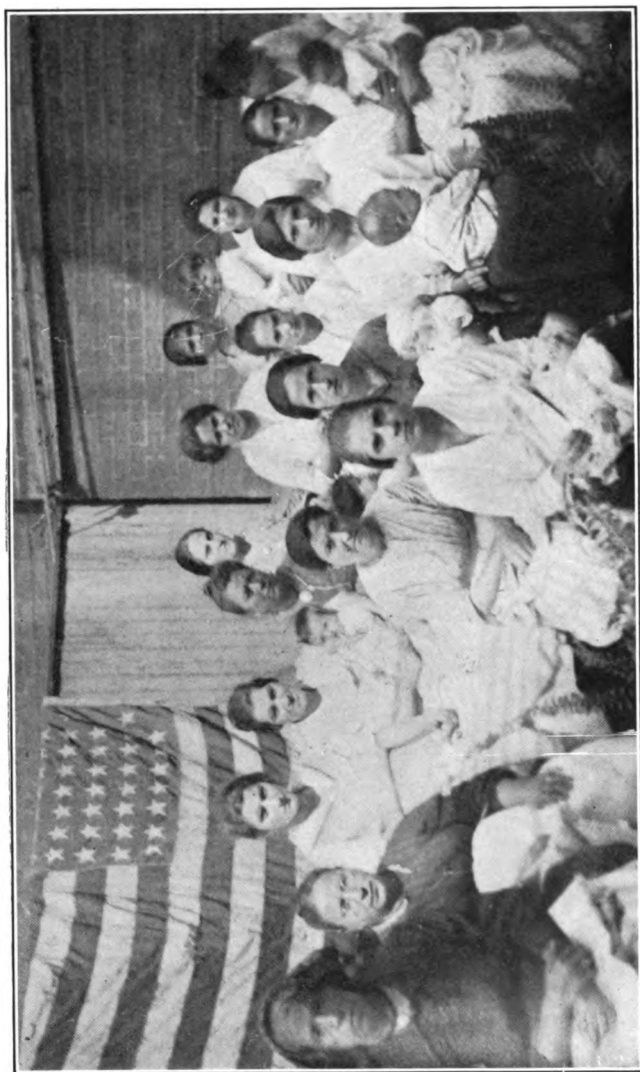
When, during his American tour, General Diaz, Commander of the Italian Army in the World War, visited Cincinnati, December 5, 1921, he honored the Kenton Welfare Center, with a brief visit, and was presented with a bouquet of flowers by two tiny Italian girls. The entire neighborhood assembled at the Center to greet the honored leader of the victorious Italian soldiers. In the morning of the day of his visit, the general assisted at solemn Requiem Mass at Sacro Cuore Church, at the conclusion of which two children, representing the Santa Maria Institute, also gave him flowers.

We cannot close this chapter which records the birth and vigorous young life of the Kenton Street Welfare Center, without a few words of tribute to Miss Carter. With a zeal only second to that of the Sisters, she entered upon the hard work of organization, of supplying a means whereby a neglected community could come into the enjoyment of some of the better things of life. To educate these people to a realization of their opportunities, to harmonize the different elements of the neighborhood, to draw from external sources the necessary help in her attempt, was no easy task.

As she was no novice in the work, she knew from the beginning what lay before her, nor was it all smooth sailing. Difference of opinion, clash of minds, withdrawals of support—these and similar conditions are inevitable in any big undertaking. Miss Carter was not turned aside from her purpose by any of these happenings. Relying at all times on the sympathy and full co-operation of the Sisters, she knew that in following her ideas, she was giving existence to a dream long cherished by them. She never lost courage, and that is half the battle. Nor does she spare herself. She loves her work, and shrinks from no sacrifice for its success. Her Southern blood and temperament give her an understanding of the impulsive Latin race, and this, with her sympathy, makes irresistible her appeal to their love and confidence. It is no exaggeration to say that the Italians of Kenton Street neighborhood are as wax in Miss Carter's hands, and in thus molding them after a noble pattern, she is rendering great service to the Church and the country. If she continues as she has begun, she will leave for herself an enduring name in the civic and religious history of Cincinnati.

Miss Carter, who is a member of an old Alabama family, is a convert to our holy Faith.

The officers and directors assisting Miss Carter in her work are: President, C. Ginocchio; vice president, D. Venosa; Secretary, J. E. Mussio; financial secretary, Mrs. J. J. Castellini; treasurer, John Paoella. Directors: Rev. F. Gressle, ex-officio; Rev. J. B. Chiotti, ex-officio; Sister Blandina, ex-officio; C. Ginocchio, D. Venosa, J. E.



A MOTHERS' CLUB GROUP





**Mussio, Mrs. J. J. Castellini, John Paoella, John F. Fugazzi, J. A. Reilly, C. V. Scully, John Perazzo, Dr. J. S. Podesta, F. Delsignore, A. Caruso, Jr., Miss Madge Murray, Miss Anna Springmeier, and Miss Kate Rolandelli.**

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## Chapter XIV—The Close of Twenty-five Years of Work—The New Mission House at Fairmount

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**F**ROM time to time in these later years, spasmodic attempts at proselytizing the Italians have been made by the Presbyterians, whereupon the Sisters would immediately resume their home visits. They could now offer their people every advantage given by the enemies, with the addition of instructions in their faith. They always succeeded and the classes conducted by the sects had to be abandoned and their missions closed. On Walnut Hills the Presbyterians still maintain a mission, but the Kenton Street Center has drawn its fangs. With the prospect of a new parish being formed to embrace the Italian colony, Florence Avenue, so long a source of anxiety to the Sisters, is reasonably safe for the future.

Not the least part of this success of the Sisters is the awakened consciousness of duty on the part of the Italians themselves, as the following by no means uncommon incident testifies. A telephone call informed the Sisters of an attempt to proselytize an Italian family. A Sister immediately went to the address and found the mother, who admitted that a lady came every Sunday and took her little girl to the Presbyterian church. "I let the child go because she is sickly, and the walk would do her good," said the mother. "The lady wanted me to go too. She said she would see to it that the baby was well cared for during my ab-

sence. But I would not go. We are Catholics and will always be. If some one would take my little girl to the Catholic Church I should be very glad. As soon as I saw you I knew that you had come to tell me that I was doing wrong in letting my child go to a Protestant church, but I will not do it any more."

The Sister went to the next door neighbor, a good practical Catholic, and put the family under her care, asking her to have the child taken to Mass and to keep a watch for the proselytizers, all of which she gladly promised to do.

In Fairmount another large colony of Italians exists, and from early days the Sisters have been vigilant in their care of it. They had organized and taught classes there at different times and the Rev. John B. Balangero, pastor of Sacro Cuore Church, at the invitation of the Franciscan Fathers in charge of St. Bonaventure Church, went there to hear confessions and celebrate Mass. Few Italians, however, took advantage of the opportunities offered and the Sisters realized that some special efforts were needed on their behalf. In December, 1921, they decided to open a Welfare Center in Fairmount, for which they purchased a suitable piece of property, and under the beautiful title of La Madonna di Montebello, the second offshoot of the Santa Maria Institute will repeat the success of its elder sister, the Kenton Street Welfare Center. This latest effort of the Sisters practically insures the preservation of the Faith among the Italians of Cincinnati.

The care of the Catholic foreigners is manifestly the work of the Church, and there has been

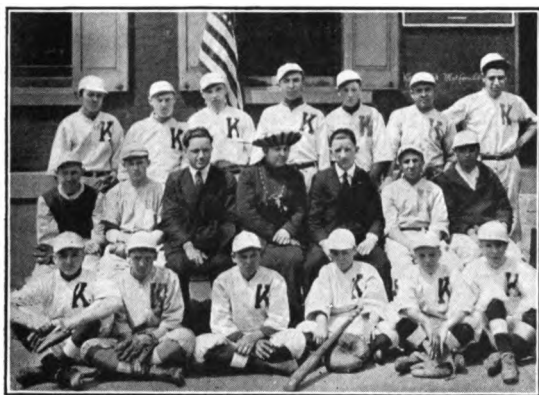
abundant evidence that if the Church does not assume this duty others will. How the foreigners in Cincinnati have been parcelled out among the sects is shown by the following, written by the Rev. Fred Theodore Bastel, and taken from the report of a survey, made under Protestant auspices in 1912.

"The foreigners in Cincinnati have been entirely neglected by the Protestant churches. The Presbyterians have one church among ten thousand Italians and the Baptists one church among eight thousand Roumanians and a mission among six thousand Hungarians.

"Aggressive systematic work is needed here among foreigners and the present time is the golden opportunity for such work. How to take hold of this opportunity and make the most of it is a great question before the Protestant churches. The most feasible plan is to let the denominations that have already begun the work among the foreigners continue therein and have others to take up the nationalities not yet provided for, share it. Would be well for all nationalities of the Continuation Committee, acting in an advisory capacity. The Presbyterians are conducting work among Italians. Let them, therefore, make the people of this nationality their entire care and do aggressive work among them. The Baptists have a work among the people of Hungaria and Roumania. Let them devote themselves especially to these races. If they are willing to resign the care of one of these races to some other denomination, the Methodists for example, might take up this work. The present Roumanian Baptist can go in



**CLUB GIRLS**



**THE BALL TEAM**



its work independently, for there is plenty of elbow room for two denominations among the people of 8,000 strong. Let the Congregational take up the work among the Bulgarians and Armenians. The Christians or Episcopalians among the Syrians, etc.

"There are four hundred Syrians here. They do not work in the streets like Italians. They are a better class. Possibly the influence of Beirut College in Syria has something to do with it.

"The Presbyterians maintain a night school for them. Some of the Syrians go to the Greek Orthodox Church. There are thirty families here, the rest are single men. They work mostly in the Globe Wernicke factory. Good work might be done for them.

"There are only 8,000 Roumanians in Cincinnati, scattered over the northeast, northwest, southwestern parts of the city. They have a flourishing Baptist church, which is the first Roumanian Baptist church in America. Their pastor is Rev. Christin Igrision, a faithful and devoted man. His church has a membership of 100 and 6,000 Hungarians are scattered in the northeast, northwest and southwestern parts of the city.

"Most foreigners here are of the Roman Catholic faith. Those of this class who have not a church of their own nationality, worship in the nearest Catholic church, whether it be German, American or Irish. In this the Romish church has a distinct advantage over us Protestants, as she can take in all races under heaven, for they do not understand what is going on anyway. The Mass spoken in Latin is all Greek to them.



While this is a distinct advantage to the church it is a distinct disadvantage to the worshippers. They go out as they come in. By far the greater portion of the Roman Catholics are without any church affiliations. They are not opposed to the church, but in the stress of earning money in this new land, they simply neglect religion. This neglect presents a great opportunity to our Protestant church.

"There are 6,000 Hungarians in Cincinnati. Three hundred Hungarians are Jews and worship in the Austrian German Synagogue. The others are Roman Catholics.

"The Ninth Street Baptist Church is maintaining a mission on Pleasant Street near Liberty. the pastor is Rev. Michael Schwartz, a converted Jew, speaking both Hungarian and German fluently. They not only have services on Sunday, but they maintain an evening school in which Hungarians are taught English. If it were not for these agencies, a foreign church will soon come to a standstill. Its work is most important the Protestant churches have on hand. No one can evangelize the foreigners in Cincinnati but the Protestant churches in Cincinnati. The responsibilities of the Protestant church are tremendous, but this should not faze them, for when Christ sent His disciples to evangelize the world, He promised to be with them always where there is victory."

The Sisters of the Santa Maria Institute forestalled the Protestant action against the Italians twenty-five years ago, and because of their heroic effort and eternal vigilance, we may proudly say

that in Cincinnati at least, the Presbyterians are free to give their attention instead to the unchurched members of their own sects. Furthermore, Archbishop Moeller has provided pastoral care for the Oriental Catholics and the Hungarians, and also for the native colored Americans, so sadly overlooked by our solicitous separated brethren.

The Sisters' successful management of the Italian situation in Cincinnati has made it a model for other cities. In 1920, in response to an invitation from New Orleans, Sister Blandina visited that city to assist at the National Convention of Social Work. While there she was asked to address religious communities and societies engaged in social work, for the purpose of explaining the methods that have proved so successful in Cincinnati. Ardent advocate that she is for the advancement of Catholic activities and the co-operation of the laity, she had no difficulty in creating in her audiences her own enthusiasm; and she was urged to start a second Santa Maria Institute in New Orleans, but as she was unable to comply with the request, she offered to train social workers at the Institute. Accordingly two Catholic young women were sent to Cincinnati. With the opportunities offered by the School of Sociology of St. Xavier College, the training and experience received at the Institute and at the Bureau of Catholic Charities, it is confidently expected they will prove a factor in promoting Catholic social activities in the southern city, and that the Italian and other Catholic immigrants there will be protected against perversion by Protestants.

Several other social workers trained at the Institute have opened up work in other places.

In November, 1919, the Jesuit Fathers of St. Xavier College were authorized to supply a chaplain for the Santa Maria Institute. Hitherto Mass had been celebrated by the curates of neighboring parishes and the Rev. Father Gressle, but on account of conditions over which the prelate had no control, it frequently happened that the Sisters were deprived of daily Mass in their chapel, and had to go to the cathedral. Their appeal to the Jesuits secured the permission of the Provincial of the Missouri Province to appoint one of the Fathers of St. Xavier College to the chaplaincy. The choice fell on the Rev. Thomas Finn, and until his widely mourned death, March 5, 1920, he faithfully performed his duties. Since his death other Jesuit Fathers have acted as chaplains.

In carrying out their monumental work during these past years, the Sisters have had associated with them many members of their Society, who with equal solicitude and devotion, have helped to carry out the aims of the Institute. Of these no name is more tenderly cherished than that of Sister Giovanni Cardosi. She was born in Lima, Ohio, in 1893, of Italian parents and attended St. Rose school, which is taught by the Sisters of Charity. A year following her graduation, she entered the community. In the novitiate she gave proof of her sterling character and exalted virtues, and on her profession she was missioned to the Institute. The various works of benevolence carried on there won her heart and she entered on her duty with religious enthusiasm.



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION, KENTON WELFARE CENTER



She loved the poor and it was her great pleasure to assist them. Her talents were so varied that she could take hold of any work, and being possessed of a charming personality she made many friends. But her health soon began to fail and she was sent West. The change of climate was ineffectual to restore her, and she died at San Rafael Hospital, Trinidad, Colorado, August 19, 1919.

Among the other Sisters who labored or are still laboring in the work are Sister Romanella, Sister Appolonia, Sister Euphrasia, Sister Regina, Sister Evarista, Sister Laetitia, Sister Rose Gabriel, Sister Protase, Sister Rosalie, Sister Agnes Cecilia, Sister Marie, Sister Mary Cleophas, Sister Mary Justa, Sister Martha, Sister John Berchmans, Sister Claudia, Sister Magdalena, Sister Mary Eulalia, Sister Celestia, Sister Teresita, Sister Francis Adelaide, Sister Mary David, Sister Hyacintha, Sister Ann De Sales, Sister Beatrice, Sister Ann Alexius.

The work of the Santa Maria Institute of the Sisters of Charity, which was largely experimental, has proved its value to the Church and the city, and in the coming years, it will doubtless be a recognized feature so the Sisters will be trained as social workers, as they are now trained as nurses and teachers, so that they may be able to answer the calls so often made on the Santa Maria Institute for the establishment of missions in other cities. For while it is true that Catholic Welfare work must be developed by the laity, still it must always gain by having associated with it a religious community, bound by devotion to the same cause.

We do not think we are making a vain boast in stating that Cincinnati Catholic charities are the best organized in the United States, as they were one of the first to unite under a central bureau and take advantage of maintenance from a common fund. Three facts brought this about: the great advance of Cincinnati in applying modern ideas to age-old conditions; the establishment of the Santa Maria Institute, which gave the nucleus of Catholic union; and the vision of Archbishop Moeller.

Long before the war revealed to the Church in America the new work awaiting it, Archbishop Moeller, in his archiepiscopal city was trying out means of meeting present day problems. The Santa Maria Institute owes a great debt to his unfailing support. In its rapid development it was a new, perhaps a novel, undertaking. It had often to grope its way, and it made mistakes, as pioneers in every movement are bound to do. It sometimes attempted too much, because of its poverty and lack of trained workers, but its direction was right, and thus the archbishop was with it to the fullest. Today, he has the reward of his confidence. In his archiepiscopal city and his birthplace, there is not the shadow of fear for the destruction of the faith of his Italian people, with the Santa Maria Institute and its first foundation, the Kenton Street Welfare Center, actively engaged in foiling every attempt of the proselytizers. In both houses, furthermore, the most advanced social activities are carried on for the benefit of all the Catholics of the neighborhood. From both settlements, workers constantly go

forth to carry their missionary work into the homes. Fallen away Catholics are sought after and brought back to the Church; the bad results of mixed marriages are remedied; children are sent to Catholic schools.

Nor is the material side neglected. Long ago the Sisters agitated against the menace to public health and morals presented by the tenement house, and though at first theirs was a voice in the wilderness it was not wholly ineffectual. Cincinnati's groups of model tenement houses proved the correctness of their contention that the idea was not incompatible with good business. Their free employment bureau is one of their best departments in that it helps others to help themselves. They planted in every breast an aspiration to rise out of poverty and today there are men and women, not alone of their own nationality, of prominence in Cincinnati, who owe their success to the help and encouragement of the Sisters. They labored for body as well as for soul, since.

"Nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

They opened the door of opportunity to all. Both the Institute and the Kenton Street Welfare Center are Americanization centers in the best sense of the word, not only for the foreigner but also for the native-born, who sometimes is less a patriot, less true a citizen than the latest arrival on our shores. Thrift is inculcated among the boys and girls in the clubs, among the women in their cooking and sewing classes, among the men congregating for study or amusement. They are



shown that the vision which drew them or their forefathers to the land of freedom—is not unsubstantial; that opportunity knocks at their doors as it knocked at the door of every successful person. The gospel preached to them is the gospel of hope, and the preaching is re-enforced by helpfulness. From the nursery to maturity, or as long as they are needed, the Santa Maria Institute and the Kenton Street Welfare Center stand by the people of their neighborhoods, spiritually and materially, and are the embodiment of the highest altruism.

In opening the Welfare Center at the Institute the problem was to find a suitable person to supervise the men's department. This was solved when Professor Di Girolomo accepted the position of supervisor and entered upon the duties of his office October 1, 1921. His thorough knowledge of the Italian character, his deep interest in the education of his countrymen, his strict pedagogical principles, and his kindness of manner, soon won him the love and confidence of Italians. Pupils hastened to the night school and the Americanization classes at the Institute and the Kenton Street Center, and young men were eager to place themselves under his direction. A number of young business men organized the educational and recreational club "Roma," of which they elected him president in co-operation with the Santa Maria. The aim of Professor Di Girolomo is to found a model Italian school in connection with the Americanization classes. Beginning the re-organization of the school in November with only a few pupils, the end of December saw one hundred and forty-nine enrolled, among



WEDDING OF MISS M. GALANTE, THE FIRST SOCIAL WORKER



them a number of Americans, for the school is open to all nationalities. Professor Di Girolomo is assisted by several efficient teachers. Being a practical Cathólic, his example as well as his teaching has a beneficial influence over their lives. If Italian men of education can be induced to interest themselves in the welfare of their countrymen the best results can be obtained.

Another who, though not an Italian, has labored with rare devotion for the race, is Miss Anna Lucas, who for years has taught Dramatic Art, and prepares many of the entertainments.

The present Board of Directors of the Santa Maria Institute is as follows: Honorary president, Most Rev. Henry Moeller, DD., Archbishop of Cincinnati; Rev. J. B. Chiotti, Rev. Francis Gressle, Hon. Bellamy Storer, Messrs. Charles Ginnochio, Walter F. Murray, Alvino Zanone, A. J. Olberding, John E. Fitzpatrick, Joseph Dilhoff, Louis Dierkes.

One may scarcely foreshadow the future of the Santa Maria Institute, for change is breaking upon the world too suddenly and too mightily in this second decade of the century. Much of what the wise once laughed out of countenance as visionary has become real, and things feared as subversive of the highest interests of humanity are proving its reinforcements. Institutions which were regarded as indispensable are swept aside and not missed. The physician's task is changing from cure to prevention, and with the advent of a strong generation, he will be a teacher instead of a healer. The law, leaving its tomes and courtrooms, is going into the home, destroying the

causes and instincts of crime. Invention is doing its tremendous part, not only in the labor of man but in the transmutation of his nature. Religion is the handmaid of God; science, He is training into his good man-servant; and the union of the two realizes that Utopia of the philosopher, the Golden Day of the poet, the new heaven and earth of the seer.

But, however, spins the whirligig of time, the poor we shall have with us, poor in things spiritual even more than in things material. For their relief shall the Church of Jesus Christ need such organizations as the Santa Maria Institute, such consecrated workers as Sister Justina and Sister Blandina, who by their sublime devotion have crowned it with success.

The "Story of the Santa Maria" was written because it has a message to convey. In every large city of the United States, the various sects are making strenuous efforts to alienate foreigners, especially Italians, from the Catholic Church, and often they are successful. We shall not try to give an account of the means they employ, the advantage they take of the poor by giving them assistance, which would be beautiful charity if they did not use this as a means of proselyting; of the persons employed, generally fallen away Catholics who calumniate the Church whose precepts they are unwilling to obey; of the means they use to bring the children of foreigners under their influence; of the baneful effects their proselytism has on their victims, depriving them of the Faith and replacing it with infidelity and hatred of the Church.

We shall only call attention to the means every well organized parish has at its command to help the foreigners to preserve the Faith during the helpless period of transition. There are the parish church and the parochial school, the Reverend pastor and assistants, the sodalities of men, women, young men and young women; the Knights of Columbus, the Holy Name Society, the St. Vincent De Paul Society, various benevolent societies, religious orders, societies of zealous men and women, laymen not organized into societies, all possessing latent missionary zeal only waiting to be awakened and guided in the right direction.

United these forces could not only preserve the faith of the foreigner but aid him to take his rightful place in the parish church, and become an honor to religion and his adopted country.

But if he falls into the hands of the proselytizers the probability is that he will lose the Faith and gradually drift into infidelity. Earnest efforts are made here and there but it is the union of all these forces that will give the victory.

We may not be able to go to the foreign missions but our Lord sends the foreign missions to us. The foreigner landing in America stands on the threshold of a new life. Whether that life becomes a menace or a valuable acquisition to Church and country depends to some extent on us. Then "Let us be up and Doing."

## APPENDIX

**U**NDER God, the Sisters owe the success of the Santa Maria Institute to their many noble, self-sacrificing, and loyal friends who were drawn to the work from the beginning. We feel it their due to include their names in this volume which records the story of the Santa Maria for these twenty-five years. Many a name may have been omitted, for the busy Sisters had not the time to keep their annals with regularity, but in the records of Heaven all are recorded.

His Eminence Cardinal Martinelli, Most Rev. William Henry Elder, D.D., Most Rev. Henry Moeller, D.D., Archbishops of Cincinnati; Rt. Rev. T. S. Byrne, D.D., Bishop of Nashville, Queen Margherita of Italy.

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